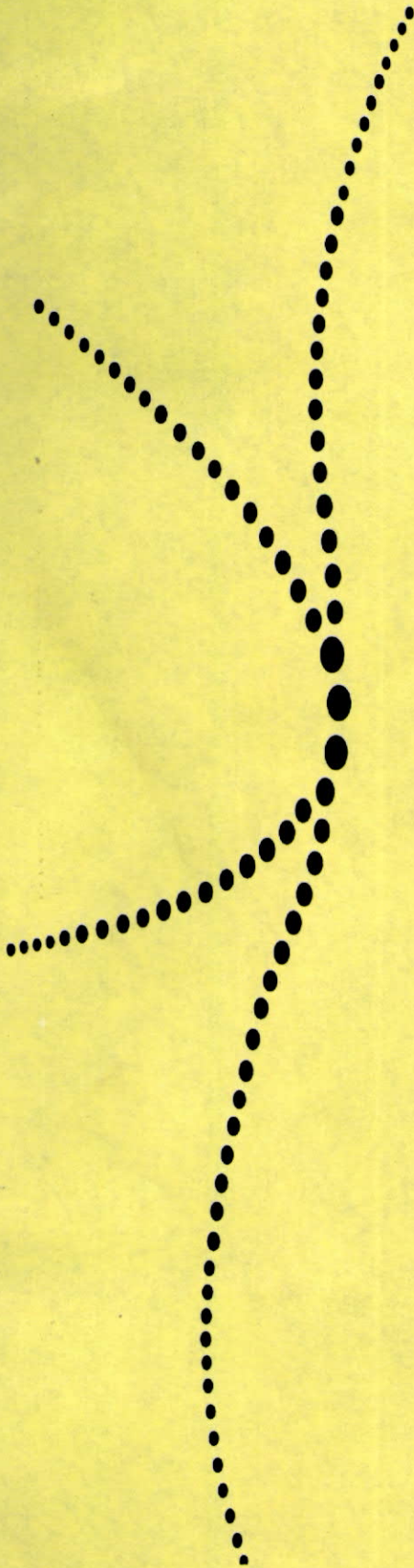


**NORTH GUNGAHLIN  
STRUCTURE PLAN**

**BACKGROUND  
REPORT**

**OCTOBER 2002**

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ACT Government

Planning and Land Management

# **NORTH GUNGAHLIN STRUCTURE PLAN**

## **BACKGROUND REPORT**

**October 2002**

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*"...this principle of growth—this principle of always preserving a belt of country round our cities would be ever kept in mind till, in course of time, we should have a cluster of cities, not of course arranged in the precise geometrical form...but so grouped around a Central City that each inhabitant of the whole group, though in one sense living in a town of small size, would be in reality living in, and would enjoy all the advantages of, a great and most beautiful city; and yet all the fresh delights of the country—field, hedgerow, and woodland—not prim parks and gardens merely—would be within a very few minutes' walk or ride. And because the people in their collective capacity own the land on which this beautiful group of cities is built, the public buildings, the churches, the schools and universities, the libraries, picture galleries, theatres, would be on a scale of magnificence which no city in the world whose land is in pawn to private individuals can afford."*

Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow*, 1898

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Introduction**

It is the organic process of "layering" development eras on cities, which contributes to their unique character as they evolve over time. In many hundreds of years, the physical legacy we leave behind is most likely to be the movement systems (roads and paths) and the pattern of open space and activity nodes which form the essence of the public domain. These are the elements which are likely to be the most enduring, and therefore the elements which deserve the greatest scrutiny when planning for new development areas.

Canberra's population growth over the next 15 to 20 years will be concentrated in Gungahlin. The Gungahlin community will continue to grow and change as will its physical form, as new technologies and tastes, plus a range of other forces, affect the built environment. The responsibility for urban management rests with government. As part of that responsibility, the government has undertaken a review of the existing planning for Gungahlin to ensure that development now will be appropriate in the future.

### **The North Gungahlin Planning Review**

The purpose of the North Gungahlin Planning Review has been to re-examine and revise the planning for the northern, undeveloped area of Gungahlin. Much of the existing planning for this area is over 10 years old and does not recognise more recent changes in approaches to urban management and government policies, or the relocation of the Gungahlin Town Centre and creation of nature conservation areas at Mulligans Flat, Mulanggarri and Crace grasslands.

The North Gungahlin Structure Plan (Figure 3) sets out the broad framework (transport network, open space system) of the future urban areas of Gungahlin and the land use patterns (residential, commercial and community sites) that are to be integrated into this framework.

A Draft Variation to the Territory Plan will be required to implement the proposed Structure Plan.

The National Capital Authority have assessed the proposed Structure Plan against the provisions of the National Capital Plan and advised that the proposal is not inconsistent with the National Capital Plan. There is no requirement for a parallel draft amendment to the National Capital Plan to accompany the draft Variation to the Territory Plan.

## **The Review Area**

North Gungahlin is located to the north of existing areas of Gungahlin and takes in most of the land between Ngunnawal, Amaroo and the town centre and the ACT/NSW border (approximately 2200 hectares). The outer edges of the proposed urban area are approximately 15 km from the centre of Civic, and approximately 5 km from the Gungahlin Town Centre.

Characteristics of the area, including heritage, existing land uses, topography and geology, landscape, hydrology, ecology, climate and air quality and existing infrastructure and services, determine the constraints and opportunities of the site.

The constraints of the North Gungahlin area are related primarily to: its previous use for rural purposes leading to degradation in some areas; the characteristics of terrain, slopes and soils in upland areas leading to high fire risk, limited access, potential erosion and costly servicing; drainage patterns that require consideration to maintain the quality and quantity of water into the Horse Park Wetland; and significant ecological and heritage features that require conservation.

The opportunities in relation to the future development of North Gungahlin arises from the fact that the site area is relatively large. It is therefore capable of supplying affordable urban land for an extended period in a way that recognises and preserves a representative range of habitats within open space and drainage corridors. It redefines the urban edge (interface between the urban and non-urban areas) so as to preserve the majority of higher quality woodland areas outside the development area and in a way that facilitates edge management (weeds, pests, fire) and satisfies landscape considerations.

Detailed analysis of the opportunities and constraints of the site has enabled the locations and boundaries of land uses to be specified in much greater detail than is currently shown on the Territory Plan. Therefore, a direct area comparison between the developable area of land currently shown on the Territory Plan and that arising from the redefined urban boundaries is not possible however, they are estimated to be similar. A summary of the relative land areas attributed to specific land uses within the urban area of the Plan are as follows:

- 1,100 hectares (approximately) is considered suitable for general urban development
- 320 hectares (approximately) is proposed for urban open space, district, neighbourhood parks and ponds

## **The North Gungahlin Structure Plan - An Overview**

The proposed North Gungahlin Structure Plan will result in a clearer and more detailed version of the Territory Plan where it relates to the Gungahlin area. It establishes a robust and flexible framework of objectives, principles and land use policies to guide the continuing development of the area within the context of ecologically sustainable development.

The Structure Plan places a great deal of emphasis on the design of suburbs and neighbourhoods, which are intended to foster a strong sense of community among residents. Each suburb has a centre, which in most cases includes a local centre, a primary school and an area of mixed uses. These mixed-use areas will include a variety of permissible activities within buildings across the local centre (horizontal and vertical). In addition, mixed uses will be permitted to a degree within residential areas. Each neighbourhood within the suburb has a central public space (local park). The fundamental determinant in the suburb design process has been a 400m unit of walking distance or approximately 5 minute walk from local centres.

Groups of suburbs will in turn be focussed on group centres, while the whole urban area is designed to be focussed on the Gungahlin Town Centre. In total, the Structure Plan provides for six new suburbs and completion of the existing suburbs of Amaroo and Ngunnawal. Major facilities include three new government primary schools, a possible site for a new government high school, five new local centres, and three group centres. The Structure Plan also highlights the role of community facility sites in contributing to a cohesive community and retains a range of sites for future community facilities.

The total estimated residential population capacity for urban areas of the Structure Plan is approximately 34,500. This figure is based on a residential density of 20 dwellings per hectare within approximately 200m radius of local centres and within 400m of group centres. A density of 13 dwellings/ha is proposed for the remaining residential areas.

Other major elements of the Structure Plan include the movement systems (roads and paths) and open space network. These are integrated with a range of land uses and therefore have the potential to achieve major gains in public transport usage as well as pedestrian and cycle movement.

In addition to its use as a movement corridor, the open space network is designed to incorporate a system of natural flood ways and, where possible, a representative range of woodlands and grasslands as well as significant Aboriginal and European heritage sites. Open space areas provide a scenic backdrop to the urban environment and will become a valuable recreational resource. The open space system is responsive to topography and other natural and cultural elements.

Cultural planning is another important element of the Structure Plan. Several cultural planning principles that have influenced the design of the Structure Plan will continue to influence the detailed planning and development process.

## **Guiding Principles**

### *Ecologically Sustainable Development*

The General Principles and Policies (Part A) of the Territory Plan have been adopted through Variation No. 155. The intention is to more clearly reflect current and contemporary policy directions focussing on the central themes of sustainability and design quality.

An important overarching objective of the Structure Plan is to move towards achieving ecological sustainability in the development of Gungahlin. Sustainability principles are about much more than preserving valuable environmental resources. They encompass social, cultural and economic considerations and aim to: enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations; provide for equity within and between generations; and protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.<sup>1</sup> The ultimate goal is to achieve development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.

This is consistent with the goal of the Territory Plan for sustainable development. "Continued development and change accommodating economic and population growth, but in a manner which upholds community values, conserves natural resources, safeguards ecological systems, achieves reductions in the level of Greenhouse gas emissions, and establishes the ACT as a model living environment for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."

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<sup>1</sup> National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992 to which the ACT Government is a signatory.

### *Urban Design Principles*

Urban design is concerned with the physical arrangement and functioning of urban activities, the physical appearance of the built environment and its relationship to the natural environment, the way in which people experience it, and the social and economic factors which influence its character.

In order to achieve a high standard of urban design in the new area of Gungahlin, seven principles are identified to guide development. These are as follows:

- Development will endeavour to distribute benefits widely to the population;
- The new areas of Gungahlin will produce environmental benefits;
- The interests of the community will be defined and engaged;
- Development will respond to local features and needs;
- Development will pay tribute to the past and present in creating the future;
- Design and development will offer the possibility for continuing adaptation and change; and
- Design and development will attain a high standard of urban design.

### **Consultation**

Formal consultation periods are associated with both the Draft Variation to the Territory Plan and the Preliminary Assessment processes in accordance with legislative requirements.

In the preparation of the Structure Plan, consultation with the community, government agencies and other stakeholders was undertaken formally and informally. This involved community workshops, meetings and information sessions/briefings, the release of two brochures, a community walk through the North Gungahlin area and technical workshops to draw on the expertise of government agencies and other professionals in the relevant fields.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

#### *Housing and Population*

The exact population capacity of North Gungahlin will depend on a variety of demographic, residential densities and market factors together with government policies over the next 15-20 years.

Experience with metropolitan and local residential markets suggests that housing demand early on will be mainly for detached housing but in the longer term there is expected to be an increase in demand for a greater variety of housing types. Various population trends are expected to affect the demand for housing over the next 15-20 years, only some of which can be predicted with any confidence:

- Ageing of the population together with increases in single-person households and working couples are likely to boost demand for higher quality medium-density housing;
- Growth of single-parent families and a continuing need for "affordable housing" (housing which is affordable to low income households - purchase or rental) are likely to maintain demand for smaller blocks and low-cost housing;
- Increasing numbers of people working from home are likely to boost demand for larger houses with space capable of being adapted to a home office or a separate rental unit; and
- Increasing numbers of people seeking to minimise human impacts on the environment are likely to boost demand for lower-impact residential designs and lower-impact technologies (eg. solar energy and gas, rainwater collection and grey water recycling, home computers linked to household energy and water management).

The Structure Plan provides for a mixture of housing types to be developed to cater for the changing needs of the population. As outlined above, it recommends that higher residential densities should occur in close proximity to the local and group centres (approximately 20 dwellings/ha) and that lower residential densities should occur elsewhere (approximately 13 dwellings/ha).

#### *Employment*

Between 1983 and 1994 the majority of employment growth in the ACT has been in small 'consumer service' businesses ie. those businesses that provide services to the residential population, visitors and tourists. Small consumer businesses tend to be co-located with the resident population. Thus, there is likely to be a demand for small, low cost, flexible, multi-purpose business premises. The future urban growth of Gungahlin needs to take account of these trends and the Structure Plan provides for an urban form that fosters and facilitates local enterprise development.

The town centre is projected to be the major employment node in Gungahlin. The eventual floor space will be occupied by a mixture of uses, including retail, offices, services, and residential. Planning for the town centre estimates that there will be around 50,000 square metres of retail floor space provided and the equivalent land area for commercial use as in Canberra's other town centres, at this time. While the complete development of this estimated figure may not be achieved, it is important to factor into the planning of Gungahlin the potential for achieving this figure in order to cater for the full range of demands, especially housing needs.

#### *Commercial and Retail*

As a planned city, Canberra has an established retail hierarchy of centres made up of small local centres, medium-sized group centres and larger town centres for each district. In the last few years, many local centres in older parts of Canberra have failed to thrive, and the ACT government has experimented with various initiatives to sustain local shops.

In late 1997, PALM released a discussion paper on a preferred retail structure and strategy for Gungahlin. This draft strategy was included for consideration as part of the overall ACT Retail review through the BIS Retail Study that was released in early 1999.

These retail studies indicate that for North Gungahlin, the town centre and three mid-sized group centres (located at major junctions) will serve most of the population's shopping needs (together with the existing and future shopping centres in other areas of Gungahlin, Belconnen, Dickson and Civic, and at Mitchell). Five smaller mixed-use local centres are proposed to serve local convenience shopping needs. These commercial centres will replace the two group centres and three local centres currently shown on the Territory Plan.

Finally, the Structure Plan recommends that commercial uses should be permitted within the residential area. These will be strictly controlled but are considered necessary to foster local enterprise development and increase the accessibility of commercial and retail centres.

#### *Physical infrastructure*

As North Gungahlin lies in the top of the Ginninderra catchment there are some downstream constraints on sewer and stormwater infrastructure but there are opportunities to develop solutions which will result in improved community amenities and be sounder in terms of their environmental impact. Electricity, water supply, gas and communications infrastructure will have only minor downstream constraints even with a notable increase in the study population from that originally anticipated in the initial planning for Gungahlin.

For the sake of physical infrastructure planning (pipes, roads and cables) the total population of Gungahlin has been conservatively estimated to reach up to 100,000. Services will be provided to satisfy the resultant demand.

The community's needs for physical infrastructure (water supply, sewerage, stormwater management, energy and telecommunications) are planned for well in advance of development. To ensure sufficient capacity, infrastructure planning tends to use conservative population and demand assumptions based on past practices. The planning for physical infrastructure in North Gungahlin is well under way however, several adjustments will be required to provide these services in a way that achieves the broader objectives of the Structure Plan such as achieving sustainable urban water management, good urban design outcomes and more effective and efficient provision of infrastructure.

The Structure Plan recommends several changes to the current Territory Plan. In addition to the changes to the road system as outlined under 'Transport' below, the Structure Plan recommends the replacement of a single large pond in Amaroo with a series of small water quality ponds upstream, and installation of retardation ponds in the Casey and Forde catchments. The proposed Structure Plan adopts the principles of sustainable urban water management. There is potential in the Structure Plan for the ponds to be located off line, however, further detailed analysis will be required to determine their final location.

### *Transport*

In the past 10-20 years, travel patterns have changed considerably. As labour force participation rates have risen, demand for second cars and road space has increased. Further, rationalisation of schools and retail centres is expected to increase the need for road space as a result of there being fewer facilities further apart.

In order to achieve more sustainable development practices, dependence on the private car must be reduced. Accordingly, emphasis must be placed on creating public transport options that are acceptable to the community and viable for government. The road network in the new urban area of Gungahlin will be capable of supporting efficient private and public vehicle use. The Structure Plan provides for a bus route to be potentially located within 400m of at least 90% of dwellings and a potential bus stop within 500m for 95% of dwellings. The pedestrian and cycle networks will establish effective links between residential areas, schools, group and local centres, the town centre, recreational resources and public transport networks.

The Structure Plan makes several changes to the current Territory Plan:

- Realignment of Mirrabai Drive at Moncrieff to link with the proposed Mirrabai Group Centre. It also forms part of the Gungahlin Inter Town Public Transport (ITP) Route, proposed to run along Flemington Road, through the Town Centre to Mirrabai Drive and terminate at the proposed group centre;
- Definition of the collector road network;
- Redesign of Horse Park Drive from a four lane divided arterial road to a boulevard with two through lanes and the option for service roads accessing adjoining development

The Structure Plan adopts several strategies to encourage an increased use of public transport. The pattern of development proposed supports higher residential densities adjacent to centres, aimed at encouraging a greater use of public transport, particularly for commuting, with resultant reductions in private car use. It also provides for a comprehensive network of both trunk on-road and off road cycle routes, generally following the recreation and drainage paths which also service schools, community facilities, group and local centres. The Structure Plan also provides for mixed use

development at group and local centres that will increase opportunities for locally based service provision and home based employment, reducing the need for travel to other areas.

The inter-town public transport system shown on the existing Territory Plan map has largely been retained. It assumes utilisation of the median of Flemington Avenue, with the potential to serve much of Gungahlin's central area, Mitchell and North Canberra suburbs along the Northbourne Avenue spine.

### *Environment*

One of the primary objectives of the Structure Plan is to ensure that Gungahlin sustains a high level of environmental quality for present and future populations. Ecological studies have played a major role in the planning of Gungahlin from its initial stages. As ecological knowledge has expanded there have been some significant changes to the planning of the town including the expansion of the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve and the redesign of the town centre to conserve native grassland habitat. However, in conjunction with the need to retain ecological values in Gungahlin, is recognition of the need to support appropriate development. The more development is constrained in Gungahlin, the greater the pressures for urban development in alternative locations where ecological issues are similar to those in Gungahlin.

Integration of the environment and urban development is considered to be integral to the planning of the area and has determined the physical nature of the plans as well as the principles, policies and codes that will govern development.

North Gungahlin includes a diversity of habitat types including woodlands in various stages of maturity, introduced eucalypt plantations, native grasslands and wetlands, grassland resulting from past land clearing and creek corridors with farm dams. Of these, several woodland communities (particularly around the perimeter of the study area from Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve in the east to the ridge above Casey in the west) as well as Horse Park Wetland are considered to have significant ecological value.

### *Heritage*

Heritage is an important component of culture which may be tangible, in the form of sites and historic remains, and intangible, such as oral history. A heritage study was undertaken as part of the review to determine the tangible characteristics of the area by locating significant cultural heritage places that warrant some form of permanent in situ conservation and management within the context of the Gungahlin urban structure.

The study found that current archaeological evidence indicates that there has been Aboriginal occupation of the area for at least the past 5000 years. Evidence includes camp sites, scar trees, chert quarries, grinding grooves and an ochre source.

European settlement of the area began in 1826 around Ginninderra Creek (south of the Study Area). By the 1850s settlement extended into the area now known as Gungahlin. Evidence of this includes existing homesteads and the remains of farm buildings, structures and ploughland.

Several sites have been identified of heritage significance for possible conservation and potential inclusion on the Heritage Register. These include Horse Park Homestead and Wetland, and other Aboriginal scatter and scar tree sites. These will be conserved within the urban fabric.

### *Culture*

The concept of cultural planning recognises that culture is an integral part of the social and economic life of communities, and that culture shapes and is shaped by people's values, attitudes, customs, geography, climate and location. Cultural planning identifies issues and opportunities and proposes active strategies for engaging and empowering the community .

A cultural study undertaken found that the Gungahlin community, whilst 'new' in terms of development and residency has many links to the wider community through family, work and recreation activities. Cultural profile consultations suggest that the Gungahlin community is culturally diverse, highly mobile and in a state of growth and change. These factors influence perceptions of community spirit and attachment.

The identity of the Gungahlin community is still in its formative stages and will continue to develop as suburbs are fully built and residents move in. However, in the early stages of development, there is a significant opportunity to harness the cultural characteristics of the community and area to develop and promote a sense of local culture and identity.

### *Community Facilities*

Community facilities are an important element in the urban environment and play a significant role in determining the form and structure of urban areas. Many facilities provide opportunities for communities to develop and express their cultural identity, which in turn plays a substantial role in the social and economic well being of the community. It is therefore essential that planning for community facilities is integrated with other planning for Gungahlin, and that sufficient sites are identified to meet community needs.

The cultural planning and consultation process allowed members of the Gungahlin community to provide information about their community and place which provided the context for the development of a community facilities strategy.

The profile of the community is changing and this will affect the number and types of facilities that are required as well as their location. Similarly there have been many changes in the approach to the delivery of services and the provision of facilities. This will impact on the range of facilities provided for example, there has been an increasing focus on provision of multi-use and co-located facilities. There is also an increasing focus on the service to be provided rather than the facility from which the service is delivered and a move toward mobile services and the provision of home based rather than facility based assistance, particularly in the health area.

Finally, government, non-government and community organisations are now seeking evidence of a demonstrated need for a facility, rather than providing a facility in anticipation of demand.

Recognising that these factors will require a different planning approach from other districts of Canberra, the Structure Plan's focus is on achieving equitable outcomes for existing and future residents of Gungahlin. It recognises that community facilities sites should be:

- accessible by public transport and include provision of safe and adequate parking;
- located in places where people already have cause to congregate, rather than stand alone sites, for reasons of safety, accessibility, convenience, visibility and capacity for a "one stop shop". Shopping centres and schools are recognised as the key places where people tend to congregate;
- in close proximity to other human services, for similar reasons and to provide opportunities for shared use of resources.

The Structure Plan highlights the role of community facility sites in contributing to a cohesive community and retains a range of sites for future facilities. Each neighbourhood includes at least one community facility site with further sites potentially available in local centres as well as those in the town centre. With options for co-location and joint use facilities where they achieve both social/community and economic advantages, these sites should be sufficient to meet a range of potential community uses. This approach responds to concerns raised at the community workshops about the number of community facility sites and open space provision in existing areas of Gungahlin.

The majority of sites occur adjacent to the local centre, park and bus stop and therefore have a high level of accessibility. Other sites are accessible due to the design of the transport network which provides for 95% of residences to be within 500m of a potential bus stop.

A series of options have been examined relating to primary school locations and phasing alternatives, and has allocated specific sites for primary schools in order to achieve close links with local centres and maximise accessibility, while maintaining co-location options.

A number of possible community facility sites are identified within the open space system which provides benefits for community organisations that require access to open space as well as providing broader community benefits.

Specific changes to the previous planning for Gungahlin that are recommended as part of the Structure Plan include:

- Relocation of district playing fields in Taylor. These are relocated to achieve a better relationship to open space areas and future schools; and
- Relocation of community facility site in Taylor. The current Territory Plan allocates land in Taylor to a major community facility (intended to be used for a high school) and this will be relocated to be within close proximity to the Mirrabai Group Centre.

#### *Open Space*

The importance of the natural setting of the Canberra region is a significant element of Canberra's planning since its beginnings. Canberra is now a significant landscape achievement.

Open space in urban areas serves a number of important functions - recreational, social, climatic, hydrological and in some cases transport, conservation and as land for urban services.

The proposed Structure Plan introduces much greater detail than shown in the current Territory Plan in terms of the location and types of open space, their boundaries and the relationship of residential development to open space, in order to achieve a high level of urban amenity and other environmental benefits.

A linear open space system is proposed which utilises and protects the natural drainage lines. This open space network creates the opportunity for a comprehensive off-road movement system suitable for pedestrian, cycle and to a lesser extent, equestrian use. An important feature of the open space system is that it is designed to interlock with local centres and bus stops to maximise connections and facilitate multi-purpose trips.

The open space system is also designed to:

- accommodate a diverse range of formal and informal uses;
- link all major nodes and most potential local focus points;
- incorporate nature corridors, green ridge backdrops and drainage lines;
- provide a central feature to each suburb; and
- protect trees, individual and stands.

#### *Urban Management*

Community consultation highlighted the importance of management issues and the need to achieve consistency between the planning and ultimate management of urban and non-urban areas.

Although the management and implementation of the Structure Plan will involve a range of public and private sector stakeholders, as well as the community, the ultimate responsibility for urban management rests with government. In the case of non-government developers, the need to obtain development approval provides the opportunity for government to check that proposals and actual developments comply with the principles and policies contained in the Territory Plan

#### **Further Work**

The Structure Plan and its principles and policies have been developed through a process which involved many opportunities for individuals, groups and the government and non-government sectors to have a say about what people want for the new area of Gungahlin. A Preliminary Assessment and Draft Variation to the Territory Plan for all of the suburbs proposed in the Structure Plan have been prepared, supported by the detail contained in this Background Report. Indicative Outline plans for each of the proposed new suburbs are included in this document (Ch. 10) and in the draft Variation to assist in the understanding of the implications of the draft Variation to the Territory Plan. They are representative of the planning intentions for each suburb at this time.

Many issues arising from the preparation of the Structure Plan cannot be dealt with in the broad framework of the Structure Plan, however they will be dealt with during later detailed planning stages. It is anticipated that the range of issues to be addressed will expand and evolve as more detailed work is undertaken.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Planning for Gungahlin dates back to the 1970s, when the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) first commissioned surveys of the area. In the 1980s, the NCDC embarked on detailed planning for the area, and in 1988 released a Structure Plan and accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which proposed a policy plan and implementation plan, including an outline plan for the first neighbourhood. The EIS also evaluated the environmental impacts of developing Gungahlin as proposed. The Structure Plan formed the basis of the current National Capital Plan Map and Territory Plan Map of Gungahlin, which shows the location of major roads, residential, commercial and industrial areas, community facility sites, urban open space and ponds, hills, ridges and buffer areas (see **Figure 1**).

A year after the plan for Gungahlin was publicly released, self-government was introduced in the ACT. This has been accompanied by major changes to planning and delivery processes, including private sector involvement in land development and infrastructure provision. In 1991, the development of Gungahlin began. In 1993 the Territory Plan came into effect, incorporating the NCDC's original plan for Gungahlin.

The first suburbs of Palmerston and Nicholls were developed in 1992, with housing at significantly higher densities than originally planned (a response to a combination of market pressures). These pressures included, "Green Street 1" government policies (at both the ACT and Commonwealth levels) and the need for the new ACT government to ensure viable economic returns from land development and infrastructure provision whilst maintaining affordability.

The majority of Palmerston, Ngunnawal, Nicholls, and Amaroo have now been developed. Two major variations to the Territory Plan have been gazetted: *Mulligans Flat* (Variation 15, 1994) which significantly expanded the Reserve area, and the *Gungahlin Town Centre and Central Area* (Variation 53, 1995) which substantially altered the original plan for the town centre in response to the need to protect the vulnerable Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*).

Both variations demonstrated the need to modify the Territory Plan to ensure that environmentally significant habitats were adequately protected. In addition, as part of the process of preparing the Town Centre variation, a Community Brief (1994) for the Town Centre was prepared with the community which argued strongly for a new approach to retail provision and urban development generally, one which was much more attuned to cultural needs and aspirations and principles of sustainability. Development of the town centre began with the opening of the Joint Emergency Services Centre and Gungahlin Market Place in 1998. Residential development is now progressing.

In 1998, PALM commenced a review of the planning for the northern undeveloped part of Gungahlin. The study produced a revised structure plan for North Gungahlin that set out the broad planning framework for the area. The need for the review was based on the fact that there has been several significant changes since the original NCDC work, including:

- the creation of nature conservation reserves at Mulligans Flat and the grasslands at Mulanggarri, and Crace;
- the relocation of the Gungahlin Town Centre;
- the relocation of arterial roads; and
- the trend in urban water quality management away from large ponds to smaller localised ponds negating the need for the proposed Horse Park Pond.

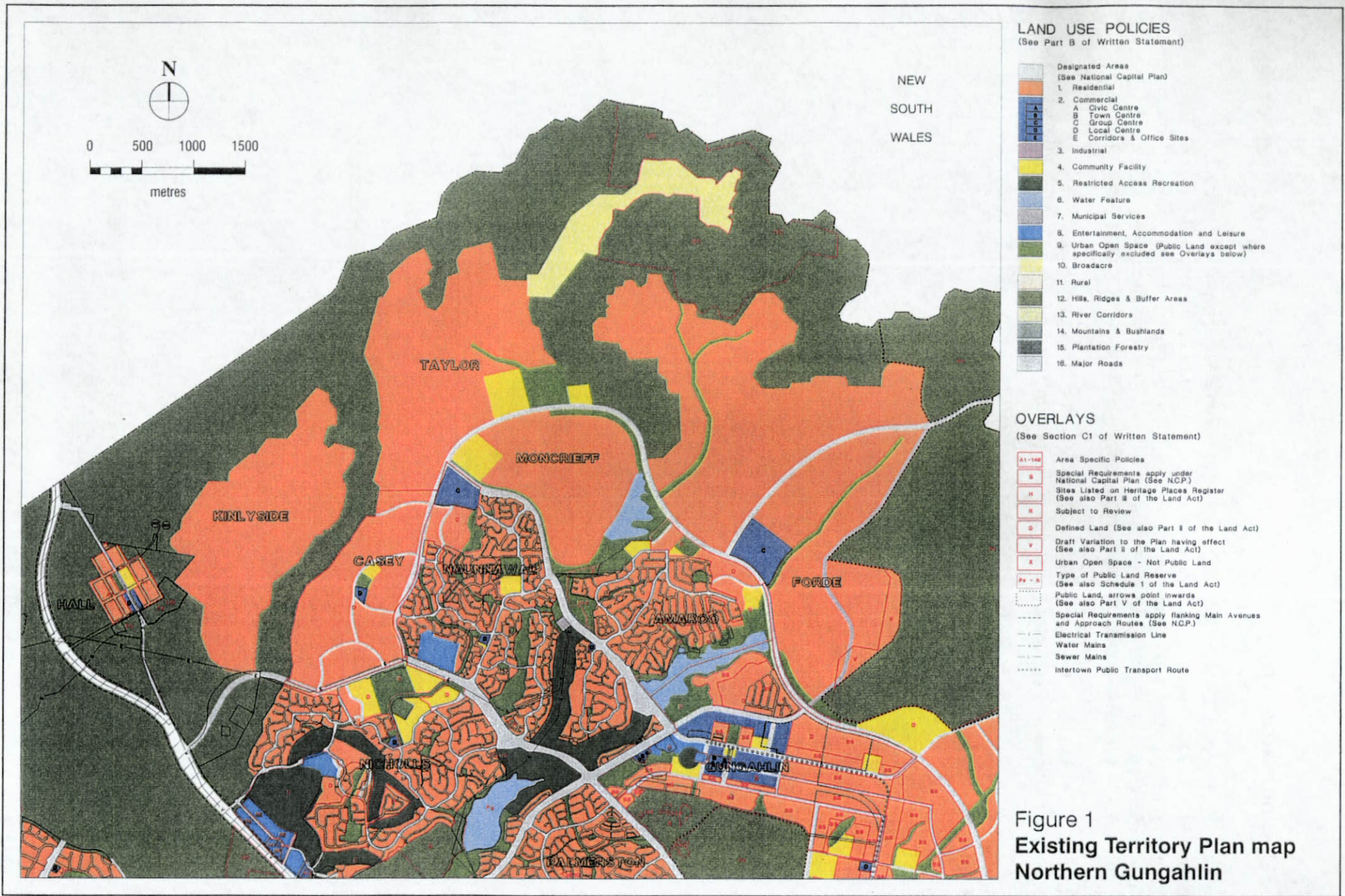


Figure 1  
Existing Territory Plan map  
Northern Gungahlin

## **1.2 Report structure**

- Chapter 2 - **Planning Context:** the planning context within which this part of Gungahlin lies.
- Chapter 3 - **The Review Area:** the opportunities and constraints of the site itself.
- Chapter 4 - **Population and Employment:** the population and employment situation and trends.
- Chapter 5 - **Community and Culture:** the community and its cultural profile.
- Chapter 6 - **Needs Assessment:** the social, economic, cultural and infrastructure needs of the likely future community.
- Chapter 7 - **Community Consultation:** the details of public consultation to date.
- Chapter 8 - **Planning Principles:** adopted planning principles and their relationship to desired outcomes.
- Chapter 9 - **Structure Planning Options:** Structure Plan options.
- Chapter 10 - **The Structure Plan:** the Structure Plan.

## **2. PLANNING CONTEXT**

### **2.1 Structure Plan, Planning Background**

In 1998 a Review of the planning for North Gungahlin was initiated by PALM in order to:

- draw together and integrate a range of different strategies and government policies into future planning for Gungahlin;
- take into account other significant changes in the basic assumptions underlying previous planning work; and
- harness current approaches and ideas to do with ecologically sustainable development (ESD) and environmental management, access to public transport, urban design and safety, cultural planning, water cycle management and innovative infrastructure delivery.

A multi-disciplinary study team was established with the intention of producing a draft Variation to the Territory Plan to provide assistance with the production of a new Structure Plan for the undeveloped northern section of Gungahlin (**Figure 2**). The new Structure Plan was derived from earlier studies and strategies including an engineering master plan, community facilities strategy, cultural framework, identification of landscape, cultural and natural heritage values and detailed policies for outline neighbourhood plans. A suite of working documents provided the basis for the review and included:

- ecological and botanical surveys;
- preliminary geological and geotechnical surveys;
- historical and archaeological surveys;
- research into social and demographic factors relating to the surrounding community, the available services and social infrastructure;
- investigation of available services and future needs;
- preliminary investigation of options for stormwater systems;
- analysis of transport and traffic options and impacts;
- a survey and analysis of landscape and landforms, with an assessment of visual amenity;
- a review of existing and potential land uses; and
- a report on consultation with government and private stakeholders, and in particular the Gungahlin community.

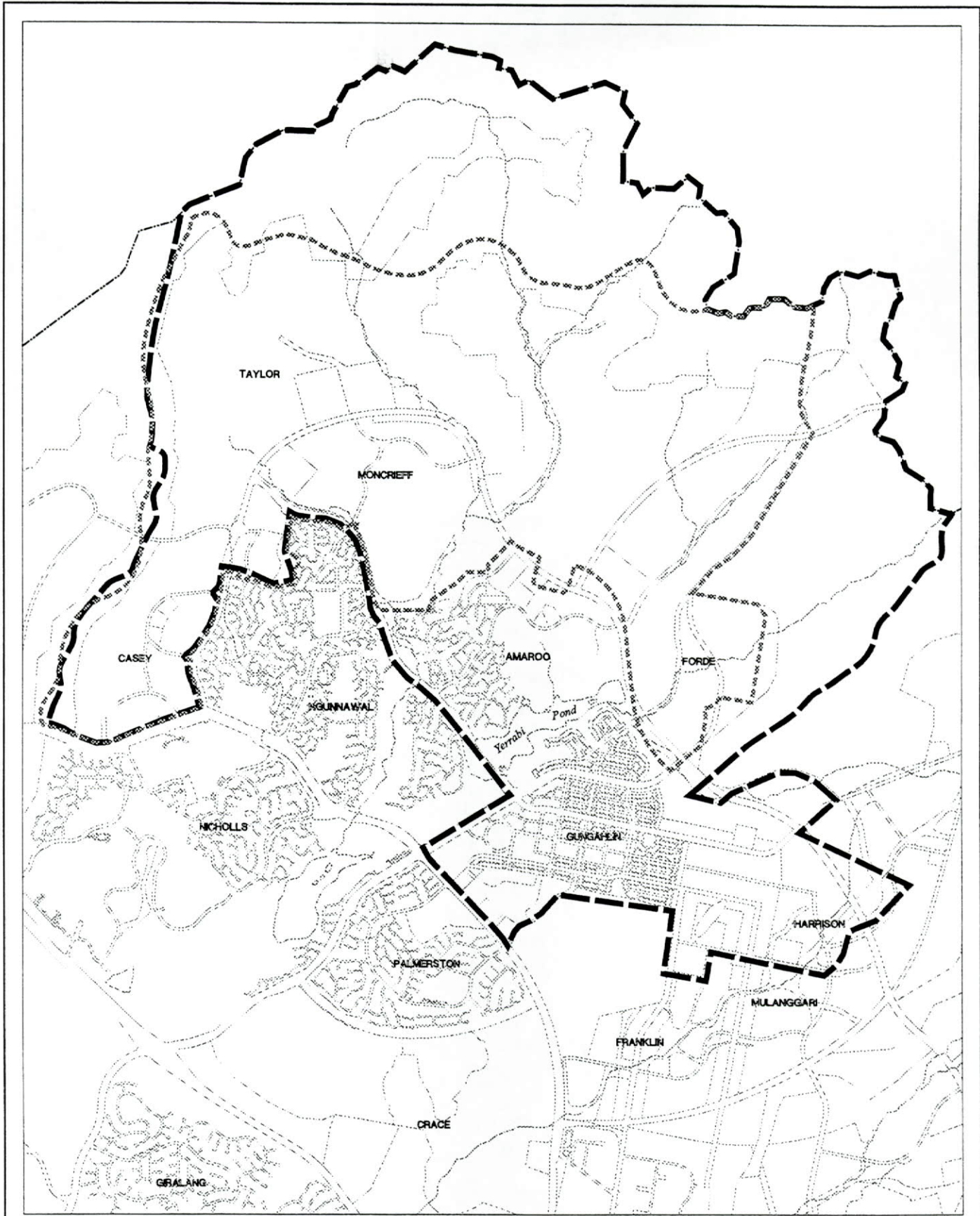
The purpose of the Review was to establish a robust framework of objectives, principles and land use policies which could reliably guide the development of this area during an implementation period of up to 20 years. This framework had to be within the context of sustainable development.

The Review was timely in that the Canberra and Gungahlin communities had expressed genuine concerns about the nature and impacts of development to date, particularly perceived delays in service provision and other urban management issues. The presence of an existing community represented a valuable resource which was unavailable when the original planning for this area was carried out.


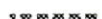
#### **Review methodology**

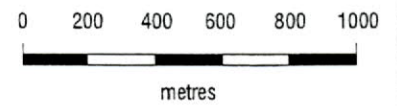
The Review commenced in January 1998, with formal and informal community and agency consultation throughout. The planning approach was driven by four major considerations:

- the importance of continuing the Canberra tradition of the Garden City, in which landscape plays a fundamental role in organising and conferring identity upon urban development;
- the importance of addressing sustainability issues at the micro and macro levels;
- the importance of planning based on the assessment of community needs; and
- the need to accommodate the continuing growth of Canberra.



**LEGEND**

-  1998 Review boundary
-  2002 North Gungahlin Structure Plan boundary (Study Area)



**Figure 2  
Review and  
Study Area boundaries**

The main objective of this approach was to ensure that as much as possible the Structure Plan would be integrated with the Garden City/National Capital tradition, was environmentally and economically responsible, and was based on assessments of the range of potential community needs, including cultural needs.

The first phase of the Review focussed on background data, current policies, site analysis and the current outer urban boundary, and included a Community Briefing in March 1998 that was well attended. The purpose of this phase was to outline the site opportunities and constraints, and identify possible information gaps.

The second phase of the Review focussed on generating options and constructing a cultural profile of existing residents. The first of two Community Workshops was held at the beginning of April 1998 to draw out the lessons learned from existing development in Gungahlin. The purpose of this phase was to prepare a needs analysis.

The third phase of the Review focussed on integrating the findings of the various specialist consultants to build up a single preferred option. The second Community Workshop was held in May 1998 to give guidance on major issues. The purpose of this phase was to refine and document a preferred plan, and address implementation issues.

The next phase involved the production of the final project report and accompanying plans capable of being released for public comment. PALM released a brochure for community comment which outlined how the results of previous consultations have been incorporated into the draft Structure Plan, and to test the guiding principles on which it is based.

## **2.2 Consultation**

Consultation has taken place formally and informally during the preparation of the Structure Plan with a number of relevant agencies and individuals. An initial Community Briefing plus two Community Workshops were held. Several technical workshops were also held, drawing upon the expertise of PALM and other agencies (See **Appendix A-B**).

As part of more recent consultation on the Structure Plan, PALM released a brochure for community comment which provided an outline of the proposed changes and the guiding principles on which the changes were based. This consultation period was accompanied by a series of workshops, community information sessions and walk through the North Gungahlin area (See **Appendix C**). Formal consultation periods are associated with both the draft Variation to the Territory Plan and Preliminary Assessment processes.

## **2.3 Implementation of the Review**

An initial draft report on the Gungahlin Urban Structure Review was circulated to relevant Government agencies in 2000 for comment. A further revision of the proposed Structure Plan was then undertaken to respond to those comments received and take into account updated information about the Review Area. The current revised Structure Plan forms the basis of these reports.

A major reason for the revised Structure Plan was the need to draw together a wide range of current policies and strategies which are in operation and which in some cases represent significant departures from the planning philosophy which shaped the original planning for this area. The original planning for Gungahlin incorporated a large set of assumptions about demographic characteristics, the housing market, the role of government, the delivery of infrastructure, environmental constraints, etc. that in some cases are no longer valid.

The key policy changes include:

- retail hierarchy and types;
- suburban catchment size;
- school catchment sequencing;
- community facilities and co-location;
- stormwater and water quality management;
- traffic management;
- public transport provision;
- open space management;
- cultural planning strategies; and
- protection of significant ecological species and communities.

These policy changes have accompanied the shift to self-government and changes in the land development processes. Many of them reflect the urgent need to ensure that both public and private development is economically viable in spite of reductions in public sector spending.

The regional planning context has also changed in various ways since the original planning for Gungahlin was done. There is a greater recognition of the need for the ACT and sub-region to work together as a result of the 1998 ACT and Sub-region Planning Strategy. As this Review Area directly adjoins the Yarrowlumla and Yass Shires, and is connected to the shires via the existing Gundaroo Road, what happens here could potentially affect development across the border including the demand for rural residential land and services, and vice versa.

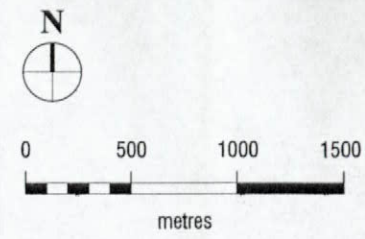
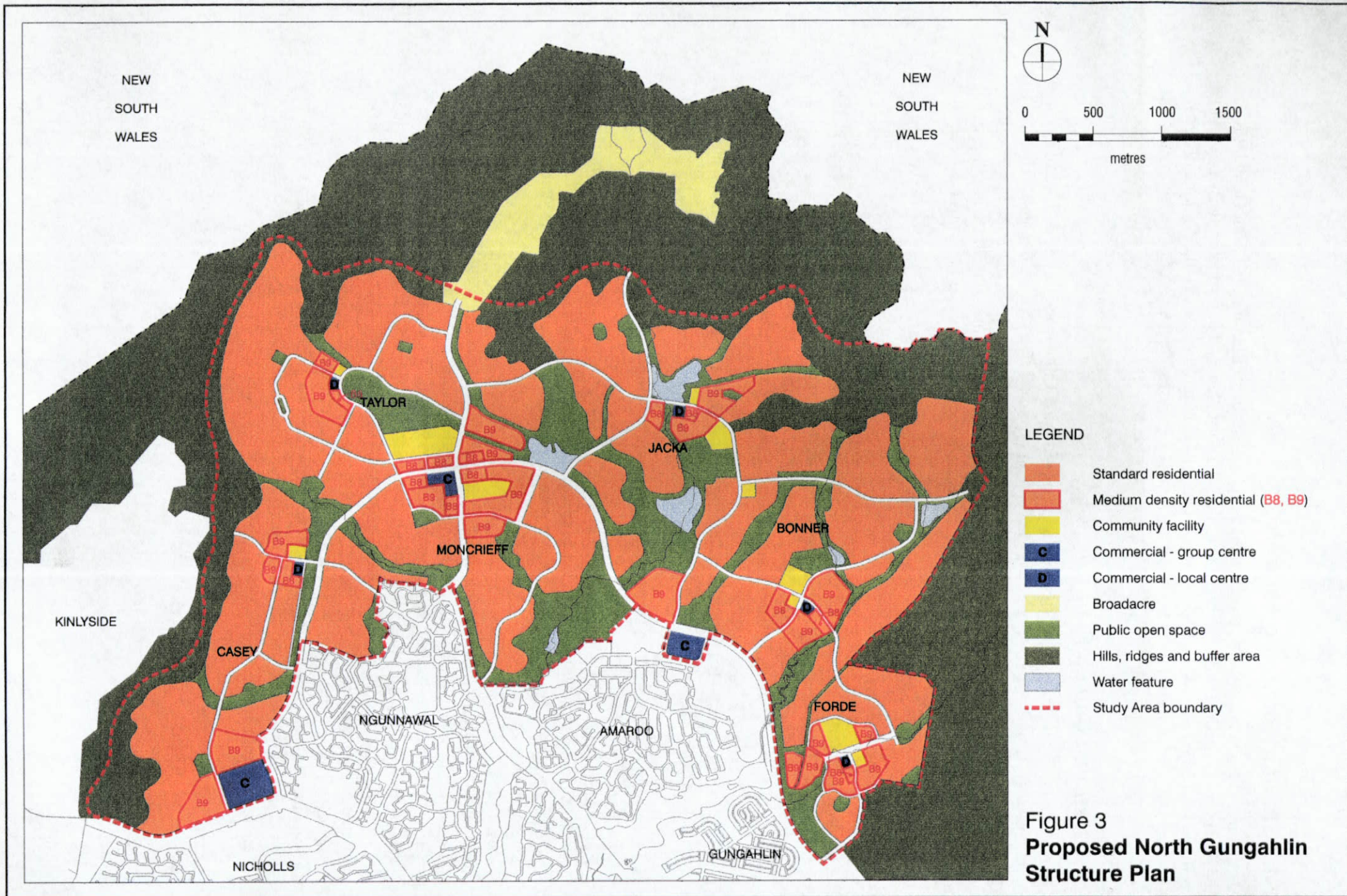
The Territory Plan stipulates the uses to which land can be put in any part of the ACT, and the principles and policies that will guide decisions on development generally, and within specific land uses. To implement the revised Structure Plan, a Variation to the Territory Plan is required. The Variation will vary the Territory Plan map, principles and policies for North Gungahlin including the suburbs of Bonner, Casey, Forde, Jacka, Moncrieff and Taylor (see **Figure 3**).

The draft Variation to the Territory Plan identifies:

- the urban edge, sites heritage and ecologically significant features within appropriate land use policies;
- identifies major urban elements (such as open space, low density residential areas, intensively developed areas of commercial, residential and community uses);
- amends the arterial and sub-arterial road structure;
- identifies a modified Intertown Public Transport Route;
- modifies the open space/stormwater system; and
- permits a range of land uses.

The Review will be in part implemented by making changes to the ACT's statutory planning controls. A Variation to the Territory Plan will incorporate the Structure Plan into the Territory Plan's principles and policies.

As the revised Structure Plan proposes changes to the Urban Open Space and Community Facilities Land Use Policies, a Preliminary Assessment (PA) is also required. This document has been prepared to provide background information to support the PA, and the draft Variation to the Territory Plan when released for public comment.



- LEGEND**
- Standard residential
  - Medium density residential (B8, B9)
  - Community facility
  - C Commercial - group centre
  - D Commercial - local centre
  - Broadacre
  - Public open space
  - Hills, ridges and buffer area
  - Water feature
  - Study Area boundary

**Figure 3**  
**Proposed North Gungahlin**  
**Structure Plan**

## **2.4 Statutory planning controls**

As mentioned above, in order to put forward a revised Structure Plan for the North Gungahlin Area, it is necessary to produce a draft Variation to the Territory Plan, and accompanying PA. As the Territory Plan cannot be inconsistent with the National Capital Plan (NCP), the National Capital Authority (NCA) who administer the NCP are required to assess the need for an amendment to the NCP.

### **2.4.1 National Capital Plan**

The National Capital Plan (NCP) sets out the broad planning framework for the ACT, and establishes a system of proposed arterial roads and an open space system for Gungahlin, within which a range of uses are permitted. Consultation with the NCA has been undertaken to ensure consistency with the NCP. The NCA have advised that the North Gungahlin Structure Plan is not inconsistent with the NCP and the NCP will be amended accordingly once the Draft has been gazetted.

### **2.4.2 Territory Plan**

The original Territory Plan, gazetted on the 14 September 1993, generally incorporated the NCDC's original plan for Gungahlin, together with two significant variations:

- Gungahlin - Suburbs of Amaroo, Casey, Harrison, Ngunnawal and Nicholls; and
- Gungahlin - Part of Nicholls including the Gold Creek Tourist Area.

These two variations established outline planning and principles and policies for the development of the respective areas.

Since the original Territory Plan two further significant variations have been gazetted:

- *Variation 15* - Mulligans Flat (1994)  
The Mulligans Flat variation responded to a need to conserve ecologically significant woodland communities and amended the land use policies for the north-eastern part of Gungahlin to enlarge the reserve by some 300 hectares with a commensurate reduction in residential development; and
- *Variation 53* - Gungahlin Town Centre and Central Area (1995)  
The town centre variation responded to a need to re-design the town centre to conserve areas of grassland which provide habitat for the Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*), a vulnerable species. The process leading up to the variation was characterised by intensive community consultation. The production of a community brief marked a fresh approach to planning, with much greater emphasis on sustainability principles, cultural development opportunities, and urban design quality.
- *Variation 182* - Public Land - Nature Reserve (2002)  
Responded to recommendations to vary the public land boundary to protect areas of Yellow Box Red Gum Grassy Woodland (an endangered ecological community) by incorporation into Canberra Nature Park.

The draft Variation for the North Gungahlin Structure Plan represents the next significant variation to the Territory Plan for the Gungahlin District.

## **2.5 Principal assumptions**

The current Territory Plan provisions relevant to North Gungahlin (and for Gungahlin as a whole) are based upon inter-related assumptions about many aspects of urban growth. Some of those are more critical than others in shaping the original planning for Gungahlin, and an attempt to compare those with the principal operating assumptions of the Structure Plan has been made (refer **Table 2.1**).

## **2.6 Regional planning context**

In September 1998 the Commonwealth, ACT and NSW Governments and the five sub-regional councils released the ACT and Sub-region Planning Strategy. The Strategy sets out objectives and establishes a framework for cross-border co-ordination on planning matters. The strategy also identifies a major area for urban development in Gooromon-Jeir, straddling the Barton Highway in NSW west of the Review Area. Rural residential properties are currently not permitted in the ACT, but make up a very significant component of the demand for land in nearby NSW.

The Review Area immediately adjoins the Yarrowlumla Shire to the north, which is linked to Gungahlin via the Gundaroo Road (known as the Ginninderra Lane across the border). The character of development on the NSW side of the border is rural residential notwithstanding the Rural 1(a) zoning which applies (with a 0.4 ha minimum lot size for subdivision). The ACT/NSW border is also very close to the boundary of Yass Shire, which meets the border itself in several places. The Yass Shire produced a Yass River Valley Study (1999), which identifies a range of natural resource issues, and addresses the potential for small rural holdings within the NSW broadacre rural zoning.