

Twin Rivers Land Use Plan

Nicholson – Options for future Township Zone growth Desktop Analysis - 2012

Prepared For:

East Gippsland Shire Council

Meinhardt

Level 12, 501 Swanston Street
Melbourne, Vic 3000

P. 03 8676 1200 | F. 03 8676 1201
www.meinhardtgroup.com

Copyright

© Meinhardt

This document is subject to copyright. Use or copying of this document in whole or part without the written permission of Meinhardt constitutes an infringement of copyright.

Disclaimer

Information in this document is current at the time of writing. While all professional care has been undertaken in preparing the document, Meinhardt accepts no liability for loss or damages incurred as a result of reliance placed upon its content.

The mention of any company, product or process in this report does not constitute or imply endorsement by Meinhardt.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Background.....	3
1.1	Context	3
1.2	Methodology	3
2	Review of underutilised and vacant land.....	4
2.1	Existing Township Zone.....	4
2.2	Undeveloped or underutilised Township Zone land	4
2.3	Summary	6
3	Long term growth options	7
3.1	Context	7
3.2	Options	8
3.3	Discussion of options.....	9
4	Conclusion	12
5	Recommendations.....	12
5.1	Underutilised and vacant Township Zone land	12
5.2	Preferred option for long term Township Zone growth.....	12

1 Background

1.1 Context

In developing the Twin Rivers Land Use Plan, a Land Supply and Demand Analysis undertaken by Essential Economics found there is unlikely to be a requirement for additional Township Zone (TZ) land to accommodate residential development in Twin Rivers over the next 20 –year period, provided that large vacant lots are subdivided at an appropriate density in the future.

The report indicated that it may be prudent to identify a direction, or potential locations, or preferred growth in the TZ should any of the following occur:

- The residential lot potential on large vacant or unoccupied lots cannot be realised in the future.
- The potential for tourism-related activities is realised.
- Evidence for demand for commercial activity exists and no suitable land is available for development.

It has been identified that despite the Twin Rivers region containing a sufficient supply of Township Zoned lots as a whole, more detailed analysis of the supply of TZ land within Nicholson was required. Anecdotally, it was suggested that there was limited existing supply within Nicholson.

In completing the Twin Rivers Land Use Plan, Meinhardt undertook a desktop analysis of possible options for long term Township Zone growth for the town of Nicholson.

This analysis was provided to Council to enable the finalisation of the Twin Rivers Land Use Plan.

1.2 Methodology

This analysis was developed using the following methods:

- Identifying land contained within the existing Township Zone in Nicholson.
- Identifying land within the existing Township Zone in Nicholson which is either underutilised or undeveloped.
- Examining the reasons as to why land may be underutilised or undeveloped, including a review of planning controls and other information, including EVC and hydrology mapping.
- Identifying parcels of TZ land which could be expected to be developed over time for a particular purpose.
- Examining feedback received through consultation of the Draft Twin Rivers Land Use Plan, as it related to the township of Nicholson.
- Identifying options for possible long term Township Zone growth having regard to likely opportunities and constraints.
- Discussing the various options with Council officers.
- Providing a recommendation as to the most appropriate direction for future Township Zone growth.

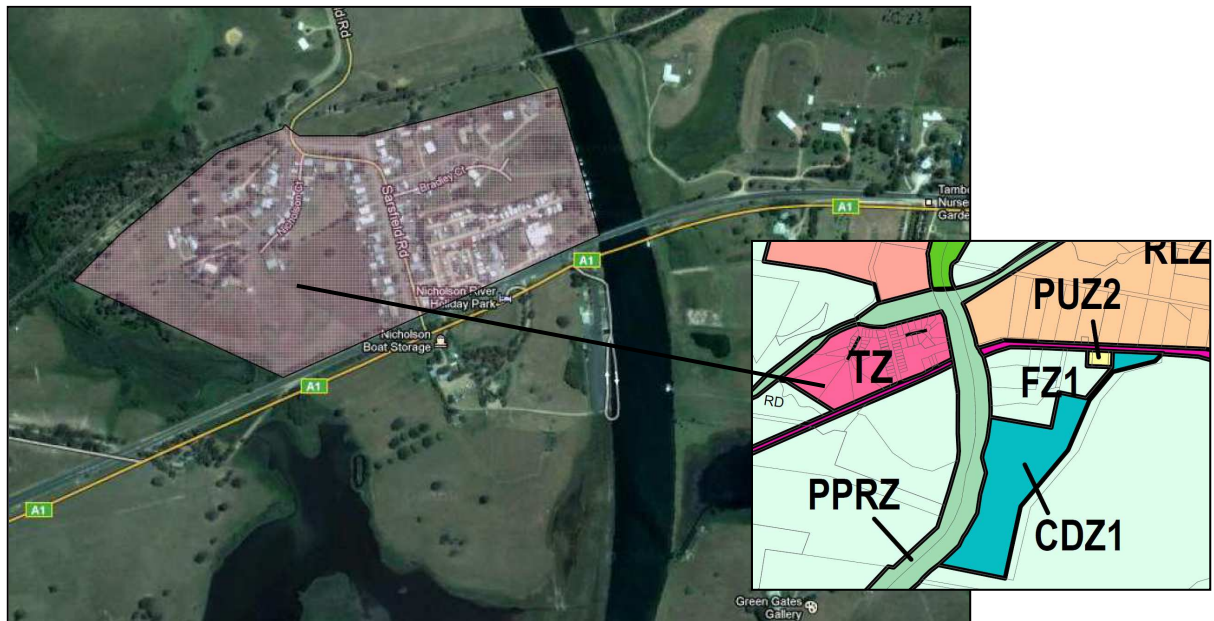
This analysis is intended to inform the finalisation of the Twin Rivers Land Use Plan.

2 Review of underutilised and vacant land

2.1 Existing Township Zone

Land located within the existing Township Zone (TZ) in Nicholson is shown in **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1: Nicholson Township Zone



2.2 Undeveloped or underutilised Township Zone land

A significant proportion of the Nicholson TZ area remains undeveloped, or developed at low densities. Please refer to **Figure 2** below. A description of each of the three precinct areas identified is provided overleaf.

Figure 2: Underutilised or undeveloped lots within the Nicholson Township Zone



Precinct Area 1: Nicholson Court

Precinct area 1 is located at the western end of the Nicholson Township Zone north of the Princes Highway. The precinct contains some conventional and low density dwellings. The precinct also contains a significant amount of undeveloped land.

Development is likely to be restricted by the following factors:

- Access: There is a single point of access to this land via Nicholson Court.
- Subdivision pattern: The Cul de Sac subdivision pattern is irregular in shape and promotes lower densities on large lot sizes. New roads would be required to provide access to undeveloped land.
- Topography: Land falls from a high point on Nicholson Court down towards the Princes Highway, and low lying areas to the east. The Erosion Management Overlay has been applied.
- Proximity to Princes Highway: Vacant land within proximity to the Princes Highway is likely to offer lesser residential amenity due to noise from Highway traffic.
- Proximity to watercourse, wetland, and EVC area to the west makes much of the west of the precinct undevelopable for urban purposes.

Likelihood of further intensification:

- Future development is likely to be confined to 17 and 19 Nicholson Court, which are least constrained by topography or environmental constraints. The remainder of the precinct would appear to offer little opportunity having being subdivided and developed.

Precinct Area 2: Bradley Court

The precinct contains some conventional and low density dwellings. The precinct also contains undeveloped land nearest the Nicholson River to the east which is currently used as parkland.

Development is likely to be restricted by the following factors:

- Land Subject to inundation: Low lying land nearest the Nicholson River.
- The Nicholson River and banks adjoining the river are of ecological importance.
- The Erosion Management Overlay applies to the entire precinct.
- The Nicholson River its banks are a Ramsar site and require protection.

Likelihood of further intensification:

- Future development is likely to be limited to a minimal increase in yield at 12 Bradley Court. The remainder of the precinct is likely to be constrained by existing subdivision and development patterns at relatively low densities or environmental constraints, particularly land adjacent to the Nicholson River.

Precinct Area 3: Vacant Princess Highway Lot

A vacant lot with abutments to the Nicholson Motel / General Store to the west and hotel to the east has been identified. The land is currently used as an unsealed car parking area for these uses.

Likelihood of further intensification:

- 927 Princes Highway and Lot 4 Princess Highway are vacant and offer opportunities for further intensification, however the highway frontage is unsuitable for residential land use.
- The site may provide opportunities for further commercial or tourism based uses in future, if required.
- Car parking arrangements for existing commercial uses would need to be examined to determine whether the land is required for car parking associated with these uses.

2.3 Summary

A significant proportion of the existing Township Zone within Nicholson remains either undeveloped or underutilised. While constraints exist which would likely reduce the quantum of land available for development within this zone, opportunities for growth are available, and could be achieved through:

a) Consolidation of existing urban areas

Much of the existing Township Zone is occupied by single detached dwellings. Subdivision / consolidation may be possible on some lots (i.e: one lot subdividing into two, or demolition of the existing building and re-subdivision and development of multiple lots). This is achievable under the existing Township Zone, and could be market led. The Land Use Plan, and any subsequent planning policy could seek to encourage this outcome.

b) New residential opportunities on undeveloped Township Zoned Land.

This can be achieved through the re-subdivision and development of existing large lots. No changes to the planning scheme would be required to deliver this outcome.

Undeveloped Township Zoned land could be identified on the Land Use Plan as opportunities for greater intensification (i.e: instead of a standard low density subdivision and development pattern, encourage development of a particular density). This may assist in facilitating development of previously undeveloped lots, while also delivering additional housing supply.

c) Commercial / Tourism opportunity site

A well located, underutilised site with commercial abutments and Highway frontage has been identified within the existing Nicholson Township. The site would be suitable for future commercial / business use with frontage to Highway.

3 Long term growth options

3.1 Context

Future directions for growth have been identified for the town of Nicholson to broadly reflect the most logical possibilities for an extension of the Township Zone, should it be required in future.

Primarily, these options have been identified as land may demonstrate:

- Strategic attributes suitable for intensification.
- Reasonable proximity and connectivity with the existing Township Zone.

In establishing options for township growth, the following should be noted:

- Options are presented to identify areas of possible long term growth.
- The area identified under each option would likely be reduced through a more detailed investigation of constraints.

3.2 Options

Figure 3a: Aerial Photo: Options for an extension to the Township Zone

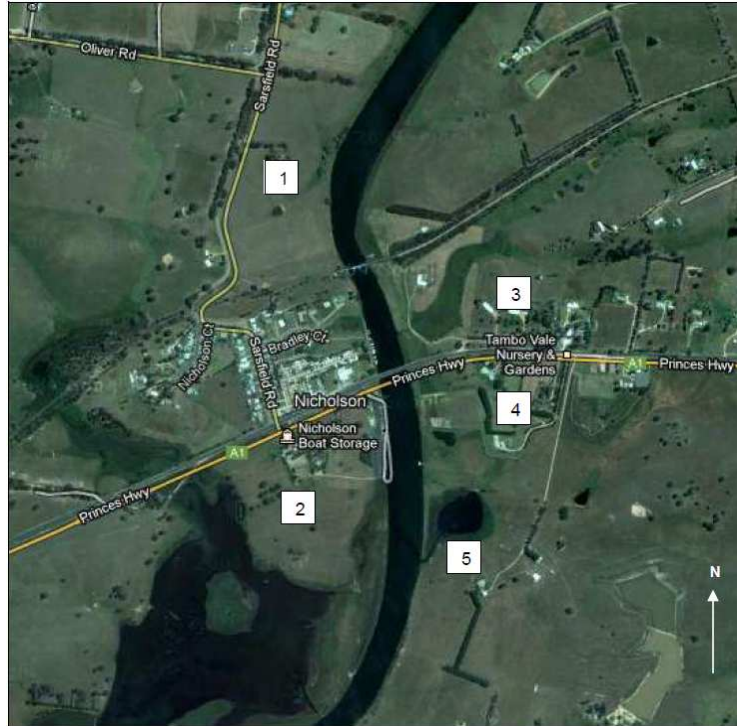


Figure 3b – Map: Options for an extension to the Township Zone



Key:

- 1 – 100 Sarsfield Nicholson Road.
- 2 - 850 & 920 Princes Highway
- 3 – 969, 973, Lot 10, and Lot 12 Princes Highway
- 4- Numerous lots located between the Princes Highway, Comprehensive Development Zone, and Nicholson River.
- 5 – Comprehensive Development Zone east of Nicholson River.

3.3 Discussion of options

1 – 100 Sarsfield Nicholson Road

The subject land is located immediately west of the Nicholson River and is currently zoned Low Density Residential (LDRZ). Initially, it was considered that the land was unsuitable for a future extension to the Township Zone as an approved plan of subdivision has been approved at low densities. If developed as per the plan of subdivision, opportunities for further intensification would be limited.

Lots on the subject land are currently for sale but remain largely un-developed. Through a public consultation process where the Draft Twin Rivers Land Use Plan was released for comment, a submission was received on behalf of the landholders of the subject land indicating that in the event that the land was re-zoned in future to Township Zone, a new plan of subdivision could be considered..

The subject land is separated from the existing Township Zone by the former railway corridor, however access to this corridor itself would provide recreation and amenity opportunities. The subject land has a significant strategic advantage of by not being separated from the existing township area by either the Princes Highway or Nicholson River. It therefore carries advantages in relation to safety and access.

Of further advantage, it is understood the land remains in single ownership and services have already been connected to the subject land as a result of its subdivision into LDRZ lots.

With this in mind, it reasonable to consider the subject land as suitable for a possible future extension of the existing Township Zone.

Constraints to providing for a long term extension of the Nicholson Township Zone:

- Given that land has already been subdivided, ensuring that land is “held” to allow for long-term future rezoning and subdivision.
- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) (part)
- Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) (part)
- Erosion Management Overlay (EMO)
- Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO) (part)

2 - 850 & 920 Princes Highway

The subject land is located south of the Nicholson Township Zone, separated by the Princes Highway.

The subject land is zoned Farm Zone (FZ). The subject land carries the advantage of being located in close proximity to the existing township area of Nicholson. The subject land is also likely to be owned by only two landholders (although this is unknown at this point), improving the prospect of intensification.

The subject land is separated from the existing Township Zone by the Princes Highway. This is a significant constraint and may pose issues in relation to access and safety for those looking to use shops and services on the north side of the Highway. We also understand that a sewer connection would also be required from the north to enable intensification to occur.

Views from the Princes Highway are protected through Design and Development Overlay 7. This may reduce the overall quantum of land available for intensification. Similarly, land to the south of the subject land carries high environmental values which would require careful consideration and planning.

Other constraints to providing for a long term extension of the Nicholson Township Zone, include:

- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) (part)

- Erosion Management Overlay (EMO)
- Design and Development Overlay (part)
- Plains Grassy Forest (part)
- Wetland (part)

3 – 969, 973, Lot 10, and Lot 12 Princes Highway

The subject land is located east of the existing Township Zone, east of the Nicholson River and north of the Princes Hwy.

The subject land is located within the Rural Living Zone as is likely to be in multiple ownership. Part of the land nearest the Princes Highway contains dwellings on large lots, typical of a Rural Living environment. While this ownership and development pattern would inhibit short term growth, it may not preclude a long term growth option being realised (as per the basis of this investigation).

The subject land would be located in close proximity to the Nicholson Primary School, albeit separated by the Princes Highway.

The major constraint on the subject land is its separated from the existing Township Zone by the Nicholson River. The land has a high point nearest the Princes Highway and falls towards the watercourses to the north. Given the presence of watercourses, the possibility of development on land to the north of the precinct would require further investigation.

Servicing upgrades would be required to enable intensification.

Other possible constraints to providing for a long term extension of the Nicholson Township Zone:

- Resolving multiple land ownership issues.
- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) (part)
- Erosion Management Overlay (EMO)
- Scattered EVC's.

4 – Numerous lots located between the Princes Highway, Comprehensive Development Zone, and Nicholson River.

The subject land is predominately located within the Farm Zone (FZ), with the exception of the Nicholson Primary School which is located in the Public Use Zone (PUZ).

The subject land would carry a significant strategic advantage if the Nerada Tourist resort was developed. The land would then be a logical infill residential opportunity, with the potential to be built up in close proximity to the primary school. In this scenario, the subject land could potentially take advantage of access and infrastructure improvements which will have been brought across the Nicholson River to service the tourist resort.

At this point, there is no certainty as to whether the tourist resort will proceed. Despite an earlier rezoning, the land has sat vacant for a considerable period and has not been developed for this purpose. Unless this issue can be resolved, we would suggest that the subject land needs to be considered as an extension to the Nicholson Township Zone on its own merits.

In this context, the subject land would remain separated from the exiting Township Zone by the Princes Highway and the Nicholson River. Significant variations in topography with a low point towards the Nicholson River may provide strategic advantages in terms of views and vistas, but constraints in terms of movement and access, and environment.

Other possible constraints to providing for a long term extension of the Nicholson Township Zone:

- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) (part)
- Design and Development Overlay
- Erosion Management Overlay (EMO)
- Plains Grassy Woodland (scattered)

5 – Comprehensive Development Zone

A site specific Comprehensive Development Zone (CDZ) for the purpose of providing for large scale tourist resort is located east of the Nicholson township.

Intensification of use and development of the subject land has significant planning history. Rezoning of land to CDZ to facilitate the development of the Nerada tourist resort underwent assessment by an independent planning panel who supported rezoning to CDZ. Despite an earlier rezoning, the land has sat vacant for a considerable period and has not been developed for this purpose.

A tourist resort on the subject land would still require detailed environmental investigations, infrastructure connections, master planning, and a planning permit. At this point, there is no certainty as to whether the resort will proceed.

Through the course of preparing the Twin Rivers Land Use Plan, the prospect of the land being developed at Township Zone like densities has been raised. The benefit of this approach is that it would not reduce the supply of land for other purposes (Farming, Rural Living) elsewhere in the town.

Development of land for this purpose would be required to be supported by servicing infrastructure connections and upgrades, resolution of access issues, and interface with the Nicholson River.

Similar to Option 4, the major constraints affecting the subject land are its separation from the Nicholson Township by the Nicholson River and the Princes Highway.

Other possible constraints to providing for a long term extension of the Nicholson Township Zone:

- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) (part)
- Erosion Management Overlay (EMO)
- Plains Grassy Woodland (scattered)

4 Conclusion

The Twin Rivers Land Use Plan should provide for a number of options which seek to (first and foremost) promote and concentrate future development within proximity to the existing Nicholson township area. This is a preferable to encouraging further development and outward expansion in the short term. Recommendations are made with this context in mind.

Five options presented in this report identified possible long term growth options for Nicholson. Opportunities and constraints posed by each option have been considered in preparing this recommendation.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Underutilised and vacant Township Zone land

The Land Use Plan should identify support for:

- The consolidation of the existing Township Zone.
- Encouraging the development of land on undeveloped parcels of Township Zone land.
- Identifying the vacant site adjacent to the highway as a potential future commercial/tourism opportunity site.

5.2 Preferred option for long term Township Zone growth

It is also recommended that the Land Use Plan identify a direction for long term growth for the Nicholson Township Zone.

This will most likely be achieved to the north of the existing Nicholson Township Zone at 100 Sarsfield-Nicholson Road.

The subject land is located immediately west of the Nicholson River and is currently zoned Low Density Residential (LDRZ). The subject land is separated from the existing Township Zone by the former railway corridor, however access to this corridor itself would provide recreation and amenity opportunities.

The subject land has a significant strategic advantage by not being separated from the existing township area by either the Princes Highway or Nicholson River. It therefore carries advantages in relation to safety and access. It is understood the land remains in single ownership and services have already been connected. The land provides the most logical long-term extension to the existing township, should this be required in future.

Analysis does not indicate an immediate need for the rezoning of land. Onus should remain on the applicant to demonstrate that a rezoning is strategically justified.

5.3 Discussion of other options

Other options discussed in this report were identified as they contained attributes which suggested that they may lend themselves to intensification. Following investigation through this report, each of the remaining options was found to contain fewer opportunities and greater constraints to future intensification. The purpose of this report was to examine a potential long-term growth option. There is no intention or need to identify multiple growth options.

This report identified the land zoned Comprehensive Development Zone as a possible long-term Township Zone growth option by virtue of the fact that intensification of this land had been previously considered by a Planning Panel. Existing planning policy and controls in the East Gippsland Planning scheme provide support for intensification.

Throughout the course of the project, discussions were held with various stakeholders in relation to this land. The prospect of its future development (for tourism uses or conventional density residential development) had seemed likely at different stages of the project, however at the time of writing this report, there was no commitment to develop the site. While development may occur at some point in future, it is likely to require a further planning scheme amendment and therefore be subject to further strategic justification.

The Comprehensive Development Zone (and associated schedule) does not automatically give rise to a conventional density residential development. The zone was introduced to facilitate the development of a specific product (Tourist accommodation), and would have been centered around a particular development concept. Any new development on this site which differed from the original Nerada Tourist Resort concept would require a planning scheme amendment.

In preparing this report, the CDZ land was considered on its merits as a potential long term Township Zone extension. Following investigation, it was found to offer fewer opportunities and greater constraints than the preferred option at 100 Sarsfield- Nicholson Road. It is recommended that the CDZ be retained. Discussions should continue with the landholder to examine its future potential for tourism related uses.

Notes/Assumptions

- The recommended option does not indicate an immediate need for the rezoning of land. Onus should remain on the applicant to demonstrate that a rezoning is strategically justified.
- This report is confined to a desktop assessment. No assessment has been made of landscape or cultural heritage values.

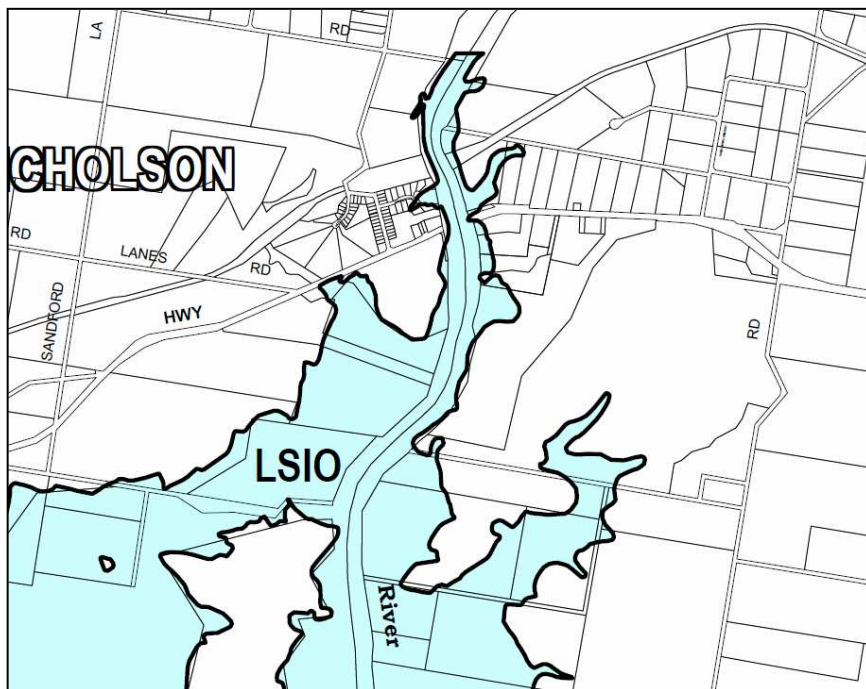
The character and “rural feel” of the Twin Rivers Region has been regularly raised to date by members of the community as critical to their identification with each of the towns, including Nicholson. In planning terms, we understand this to reflect the importance of visual connections to the existing natural landscape which exists within the region (i.e: hills, river systems, wetlands etc).

To ensure that any future extension of the Nicholson does not compromise these values, we would suggest that any future request to rezone land include an assessment of landscape and cultural heritage values and an identification of potential impacts.

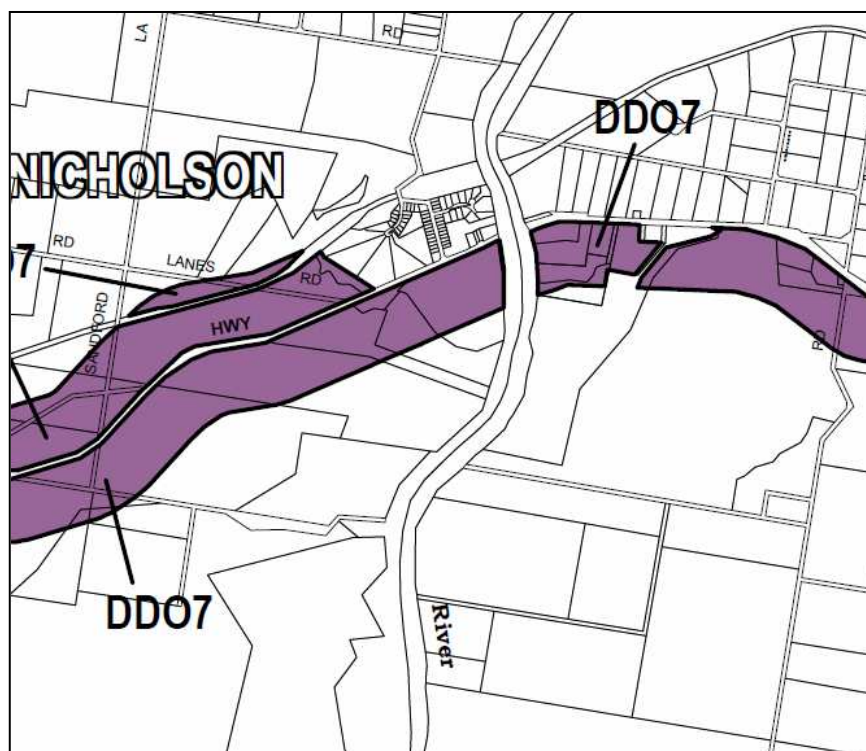
- In preparing the Twin Rivers Land Use Plan, a desktop review of servicing infrastructure was undertaken. In doing so, contact was made with relevant authorities, Council, and other key stakeholders. No significant servicing constraints were identified. Potential areas requiring infrastructure upgrades were identified. This included the growth options considered in this report.

Appendix 1 - Planning Overlays

Land subject to inundation (LSIO)

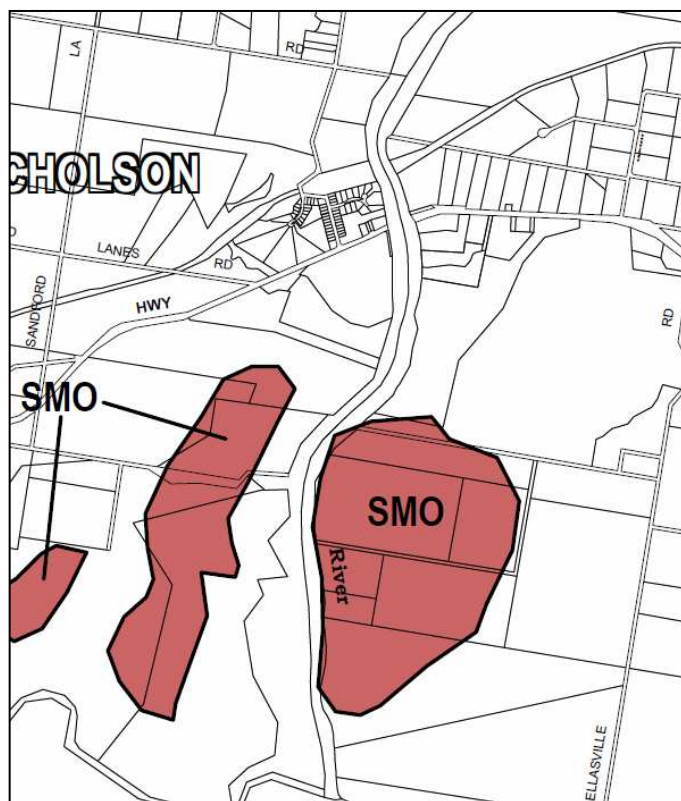


Design and Development Overlay (DDO7)

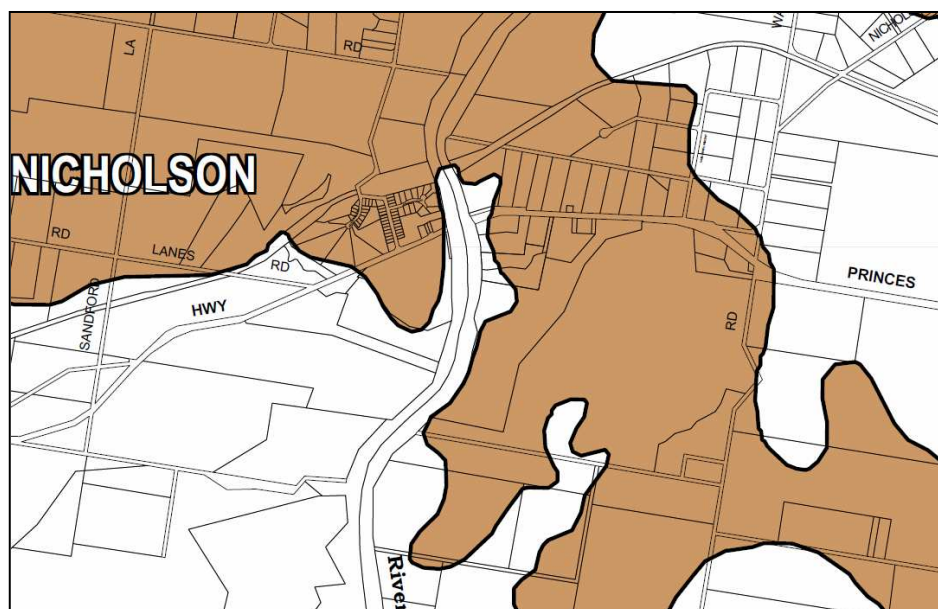


Source: DPCD Planning Schemes Online

Salinity Management Overlay (SMO)

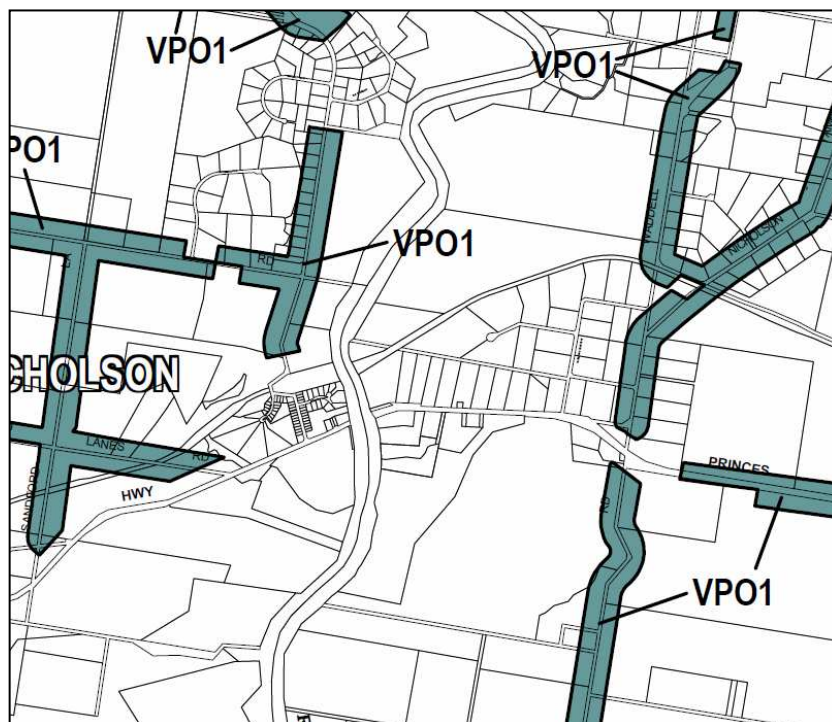


Erosion Management Overlay (EMO)



Source: DPCD Planning Schemes Online

Vegetation Protection Overlay 1



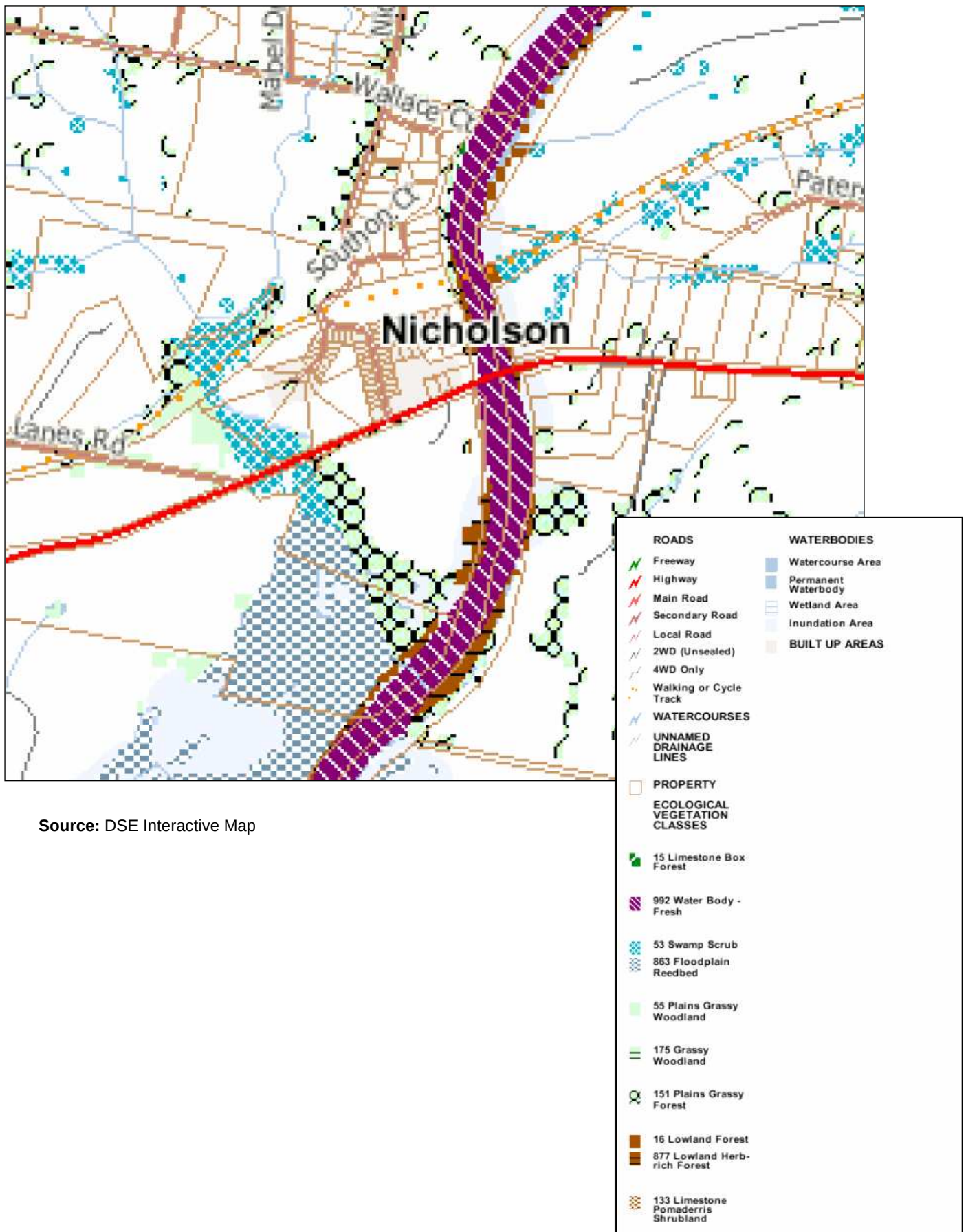
Environmental Significance Overlay 29



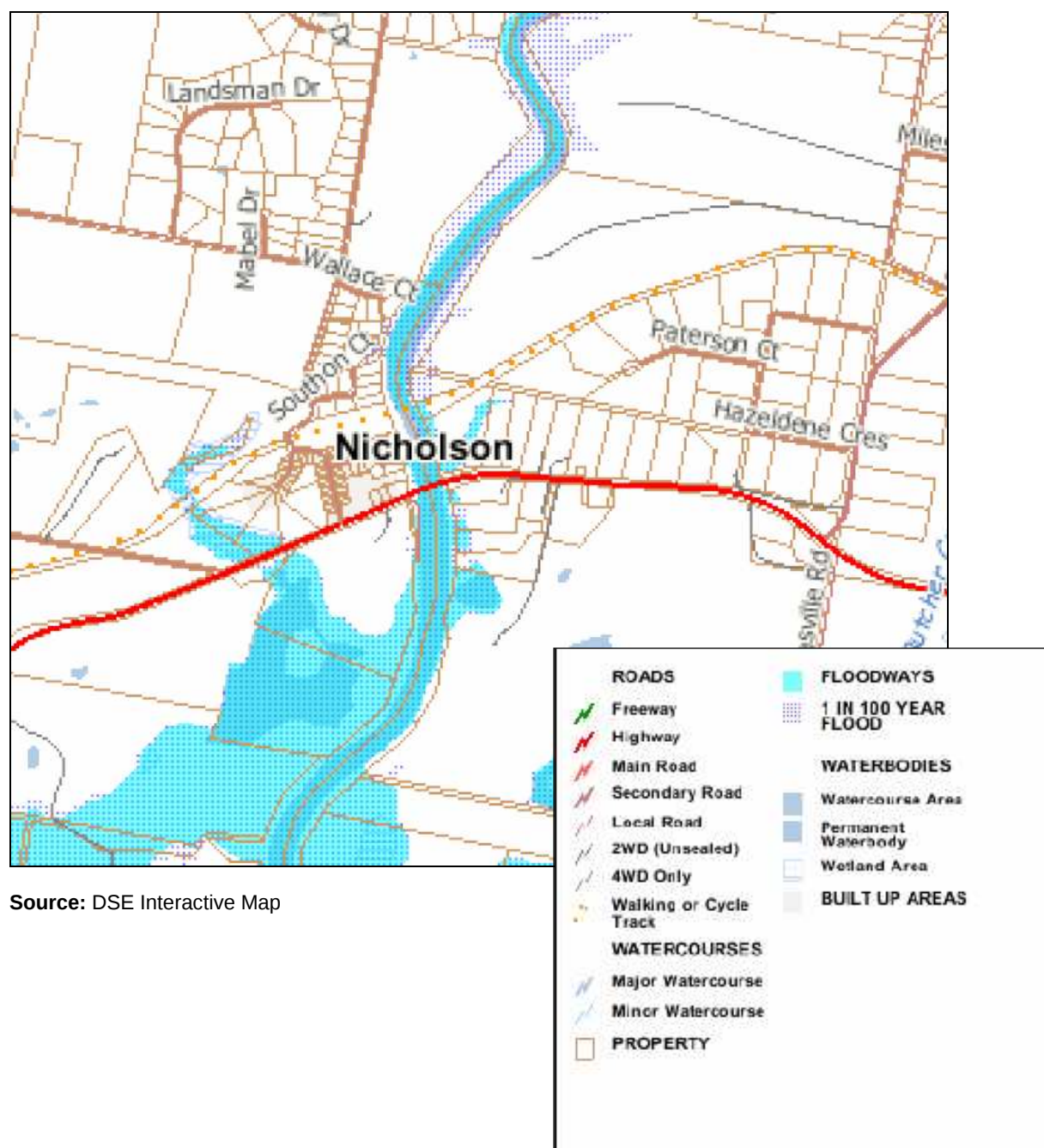
Source: DPCD Planning Schemes Online

Appendix 2 – Other site characteristics

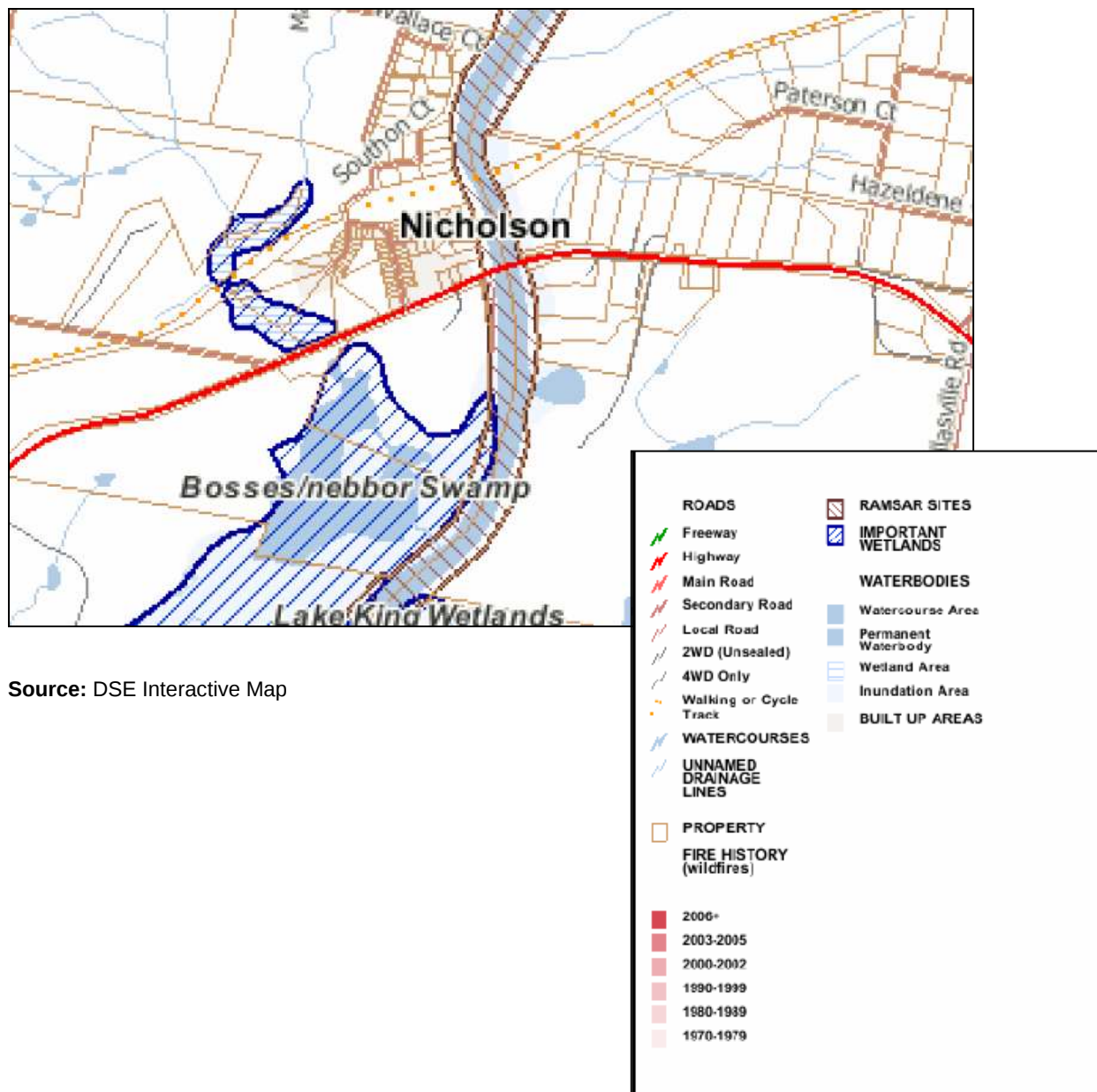
Ecological vegetation classes (EVC's)



Source: DSE Interactive Map

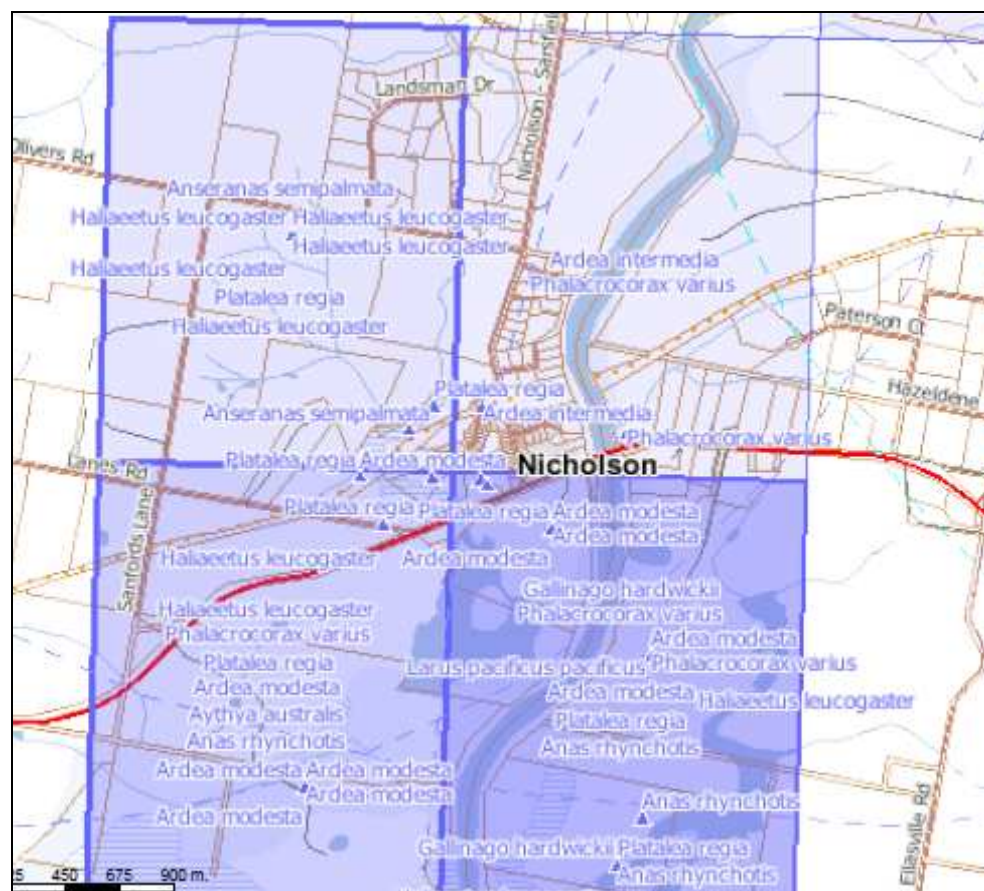


Ramsar & Wetlands



Source: DSE Interactive Map

Threatened Fauna



Source: DSE Interactive Map