

# Whole Farm Plan

'Tinderbox Farm', 441 Tinderbox Road, Tinderbox

Version 3, November 2023



Landowner: Tinderbox P/L

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## 1. Background

The subject land is 'Tinderbox Farm', which is comprised of a single title containing existing dwellings, vineyards, pasture, and large areas of forest extending along the western side of the Tinderbox Hills (CT 139168/1). The property is variously zoned Rural Resource and Environmental Living under the Kingborough Interim Planning Scheme 2015 (the Scheme).

The property is subject to an application for subdivision (DAS-2020-13), which focuses primarily on the areas of Environmental Living land, but also seeks to divide the area of Rural Resource land roughly in half. This would create lots of +/- 45.2 ha in size (Lot 9) and +/- 47.3 ha in size (Lot 10) respectively (see Figure 1). Pursuant to Clause 26.5.1 P1(e) of the Scheme, a *Whole Farm Plan* is required in support of an application to subdivide in the *Rural Resource Zone* to demonstrate that the proposal provides for the sustainable commercial operation of land.

This plan has been prepared after consultation with the current Farm Manager, Mr Alec Townsend.

## 2. Farming operations

Historically the property has been used for pastoral purposes, with a long history of sheep grazing for fine-wool production. Recently (circa 2010) there has been a move away from sheep grazing and fine wool production.

Pasture on the property is currently used to run 70 head of beef cattle, along with 30 sheep for fat lamb production. The current Farm Manager has additional off-farm income and pastoral activities are not a stand-alone commercial operation.

A small vineyard was established at the southern end of the farm in 1994. It is farmed on contract as a separate operation from the pastoral activities and produces Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Reisling and sparkling wines.

## 3. Resources and Constraints

### 3.1 Land Area

The area of Tinderbox Farm has been reduced over time through previous subdivision of land in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The actively farmed portion of the land has also been significantly reduced since sheep grazing for fine wool ceased in circa 2010. Previously, the extensive areas of dry forest and woodland on the property supported bush-run grazing of merino sheep for most of the year, but now these areas are only used for transit of cattle between different areas of pasture on the property. This situation is unlikely to change given the constraints of the farm's peri-urban location and the conservation values associated with the forest and woodland on the property (see below).

The farm is currently 322 ha in size, with +/- 100 ha of pasture and +/- 2.7 ha of vineyard.

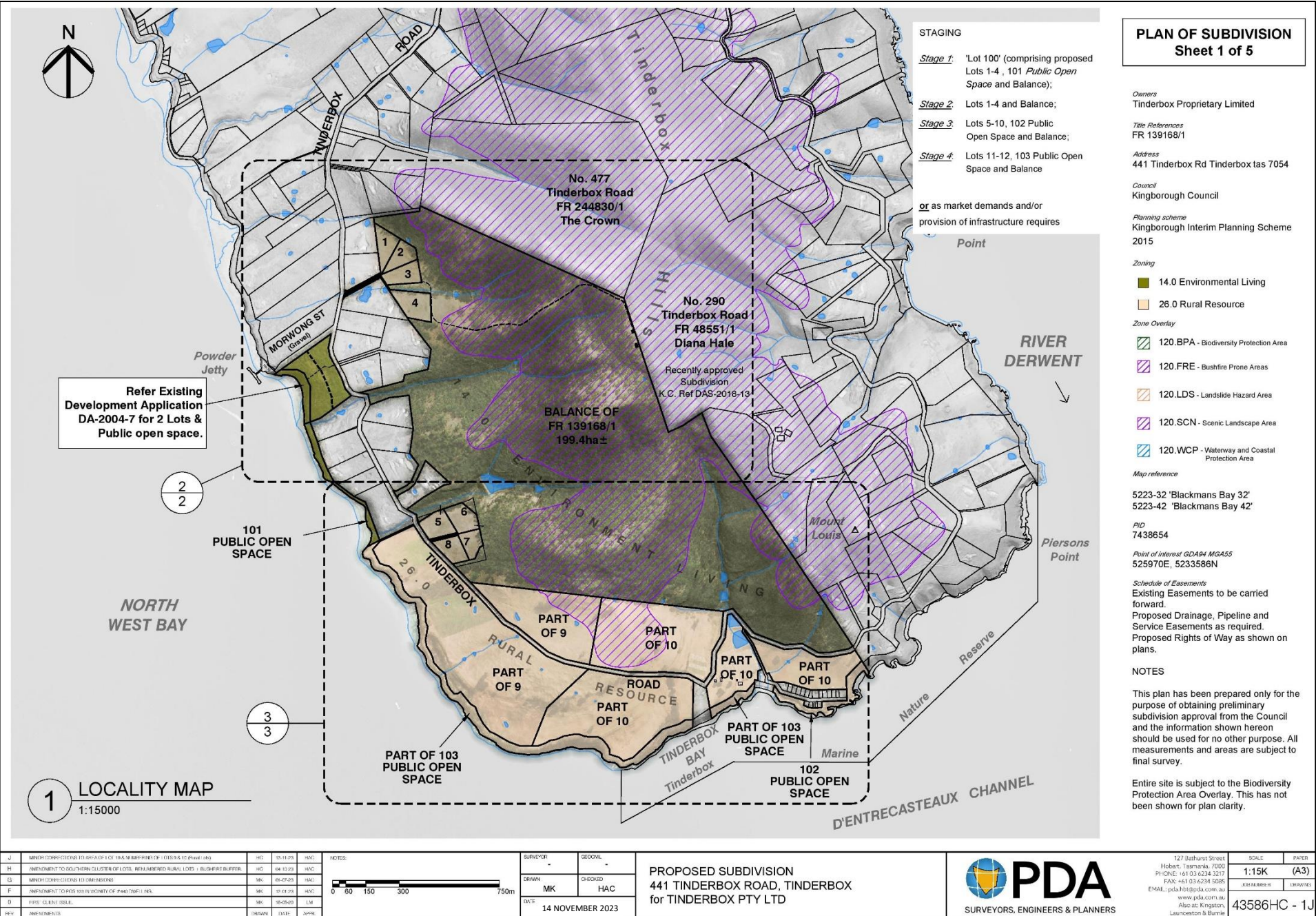


Figure 1. Proposed subdivision (PDA Surveyors, November 2023)

### 3.2 Topography

The developed areas of the farm coincide with the lower and more moderate slopes of the Tinderbox Hills, although this likely has more to do with soils and soil depth than topography. The steep and rocky upper slopes of the farm certainly pose a significant constraint to any agricultural development and this area of land is also constrained by other issues (see below).

### 3.3 Geology and Soils

The upper slopes of the property have a dolerite substrate and are characterised by shallow soil profiles and frequent rocky outcrops. Most of the lower slopes have a sandstone substrate, with some rocky outcrops on ridges and in gullies but relatively deep, sandy soils across the more moderate slopes. In the central south of the property there is a basalt plug supporting more productive soils, albeit that much of this area has a relatively shallow soil profile.

It is a reasonable generalisation to say that the cleared and developed portions of the farm coincide with deeper sandy soils and basalt soils on the lower, more moderate slopes. Most of this area supports sandy loam with little organic content that requires regular application of fertiliser to support exotic pastures and fodder crops (which are typically sown annually on the deeper soils). There are pockets of better soil in places, some of which coincide with the influence of the basalt substrate in the central south. The mixed influence of basalt and sandstone substrates are promoted as a unique feature of the growing conditions for the existing vineyards.

### 3.4 Water

Seasonal conditions, particularly unpredictable and variable rainfall, are identified by the Farm Manager as the most significant constraints to commercial agricultural use of the property, with beef cattle production considered unviable as a stand-alone enterprise under current conditions. The current conditions do include an undeveloped irrigation potential associated with existing water storages and ground water (see below).

There are currently three large, in-stream dams on the property - one roughly in the centre of the property on the proposed Balance lot and two in the south-east of the property near the existing dwellings and vineyards (in series). The exact size of these dams is not known by the Farm Manager, but capacities are probably around 10 M l at each end of the property. The property also contains numerous small dams (see attached map) and two bores.

Existing water resources are not heavily utilised under current farming operations:

- the large dam in the centre of the property is only used for stock watering, with water being gravity fed to smaller dams and troughs down-slope,
- the larger south-eastern dams are used to irrigate vineyards and domestic gardens, with water pumped to header tanks upslope before being gravity fed to the vineyards; these dams have excess capacity (not defined) that is not being utilised,

- the smaller in-stream dams in the forest and woodland are not currently utilised, while the smaller dams in the paddocks are only used for stock watering, and
- neither of the existing bores are currently being used.

In addition to on-farm water resources, there is a TasWater main that runs parallel to the shoreline of North-West Bay to within 70 m of the northern boundary of proposed Lot 9. It is safe to assume that the capacity of this existing reticulated water supply would not allow for a commercial irrigation offtake, but any upgrades to reticulated public water supplies in future may provide opportunities to bring water onto the farm from this source.

### 3.5 Peri-urban location

The peri-urban location of the farm has posed several inter-related management challenges that have played a significant role in shaping current farming operations and practices:

- there is regular recreational use of the forested parts of the property by the broader community, most without the consent of the owners/manager,
- dog attacks on sheep were a regular occurrence in the past and this was a significant factor in the decision to move away from sheep farming,
- land use conflict with neighbours and the broader community is exacerbated by the peri-urban location, with ongoing tension over some aspects of farm management, including control of native browsers through shooting and spraying of chemicals.

### 3.6 Conservation & related issues

The forest and woodland on the upper slopes of the farm have significant conservation value, containing three threatened vegetation communities and providing habitat for a range of threatened species, including nesting and foraging habitat for the endangered Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle, the endangered forty-spotted pardalote and the critically endangered swift parrot.

Since bush-run grazing of sheep ceased in circa 2010, the forest and woodland on the property has become a defacto private reserve. Should the current subdivision application be approved, the protection of these areas for conservation purposes would be formalised under a mechanism registered against title (a Part V Agreement under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1995*).

The conservation values of the property and the existence of a defacto private reserve on the upper slopes have several implications for farm operations:

- it is undesirable and out of step with community expectations and aspirations for farming operations to occur on the upper slopes, as this would impact significant conservation values,
- management of the forest and woodland as a defacto private reserve has led to an increase in the population of native grazers and browsers, particularly Bennetts wallabies, which has impacted adjoining areas of pasture, and
- management of the forest and woodland as a defacto private reserve has decreased the incentive for active management of this area as part of routine farming operations.

As a result of the latter two issues, the owners have recently invested in ‘wallaby-proof’ fencing between areas of pasture and forest, which reinforces the physical separation between the productive areas of the farm and the defacto private reserve on the upper slopes.

## **4. Future Agricultural/Horticultural opportunities**

It is difficult to speculate about future opportunities and potential in agriculture, particularly with a property such as Tinderbox Farm where the current operation is not a stand-alone business enterprise and where the peri-urban location increases potential for boutique farming operations linked to other complementary land uses such as tourism, accommodation, hospitality or retail (eg cellar door sales).

The following are relevant considerations identified by the Farm Manager:

- under current conditions and constraints, the property has insufficient scale and resources to support a viable, stand-alone cattle grazing enterprise,
- the property could probably support up to 300 ewes producing +/- 400 fat lambs, but past issues with dog attacks and associated conflict with neighbours make sheep farming an unattractive option for the current owners/manager,
- investment in irrigation infrastructure to make better use of existing water resources would increase productivity and agricultural potential, but all water resources are ultimately subject to the same underlying constraints imposed by unpredictable and variable rainfall; the potential gain from increased investment in irrigation is unknown and would require a detailed analysis beyond the scope of this Plan,
- given the location and site characteristics of the farm and general trends within the agricultural sector, any future commercial development on the farm is more likely to be horticultural than pastoral, with expansion of the existing vineyard operations a likely outcome at some point, and
- any investment in improved infrastructure, including irrigation, is likely to yield higher returns in support of a horticultural enterprise than a pastoral enterprise, particularly if leveraged against other complementary land uses such as tourism, accommodation, hospitality, or retail.

## **5. Proposed subdivision in the Rural Resource Zone**

The current subdivision proposal seeks to take advantage of the areas of the farm which are zoned Environmental Living to generate a modest expansion of residential lots in the area.

The proposed separation of the adjoining Rural Resource land into two lots does not reflect an intention to separate the ownership of these lots, but simply to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the current application to add value by generating an additional lot and to create more flexibility for the future. Nevertheless, once a separate title has been created it does significantly increase the chances that titles will end up in different ownership and this could impact the viability of the resulting properties for agricultural purposes.

The two proposed Rural Resource lots are roughly equal in size (+/- 45.2 ha and +/- 47.3 ha in size respectively). Each captures areas of deeper sandy soil, areas of basalt soil and water storages (an easement will preserve water rights to the benefit of Lot 9 over the large dam on the Balance lot).

Considering the future opportunities discussed above, the scale of proposed Lots 9 & 10, the peri-urban location and the resources available to each lot, it is reasonable to conclude that the proposed lots will be large enough to support viable agricultural enterprises. This is well illustrated by the typical scale of commercial vineyards with cellar-door operations in south east Tasmania (sources: [winetasmania.com.au](http://winetasmania.com.au) and [www.winecompanion.com.au](http://www.winecompanion.com.au)):

- Frogmore Creek (55 ha),
- Riversdale Estate (37 ha),
- Nocton (36 ha),
- Stefano Lubiano (25 ha),
- Tolpuddle 20 ha,
- Moorilla (15.5 ha),
- Pooley Wines (12.5 ha),
- Domaine A (11 ha), and
- numerous vineyards less than 10 ha in size, including Derwent Estate (10 ha), Home Hill (9 ha), Craigow (8.75 ha), Clemmens Hill (8 ha), Bream Creek (7.6 ha), Pressing Matters (7.3 ha), Coal River (4.5 ha), Bangor (4 ha) and Puddleduck (3.5 ha).

## 6. Whole Farm Planning

Subject to achieving their price expectations, the current owners wish to sell Tinderbox Farm. The current application for subdivision is designed to achieve a permit which will increase the value of the property to a potential purchaser, ie the owners do not intend to pursue the subdivision themselves, but to market the property with a valid subdivision permit in place (to be pursued (or not) by a future owner).

This context makes the drafting of a 'Whole Farm Plan' problematic, since the current owners are not operating the farm as a stand-alone commercial enterprise and do not aspire to own or to farm the property in future, while the aspirations of any future owners are a matter of pure speculation.

For the purposes of this Plan, it is assumed that the farm is owned by someone who will act on a subdivision permit and will use the capital from sale of Environmental Living lots to invest in expanded vineyard operations or other horticultural enterprises, while maintaining a diversified operation with some ongoing pastoral use.

The key aspects of the Plan are illustrated in Figure 2 and are as follows.



1. Act on a subdivision permit pursuant to the proposal submitted by PDA Surveyors (DAS-2020-13) and in the process formalise the land-use zoning of the property into 'Future residential land and public open space', 'Conservation land' and 'Agricultural land'.
2. Progress the residential aspects of the subdivision in stages and use the capital raised to:
  - investigate in detail the potential for
    - expanded vineyard or other horticultural enterprises on the farm,
    - cellar-door operations or other complementary land uses, and
    - improved water security,
  - within the constraints of the site, expand vineyard operations or establish other crops on the most prospective sites and establish reticulation and irrigation infrastructure in support of those plantings, and
  - subject to viability and planning approvals, establish a cellar-door operation and/or other complementary land uses.
3. At some point in the future, consider separation of Lots 9 and 10 into distinct farming operations, subject to:
  - the commercial success of the farming operation,
  - the location of crops and infrastructure, and
  - issues of scale and economic viability.

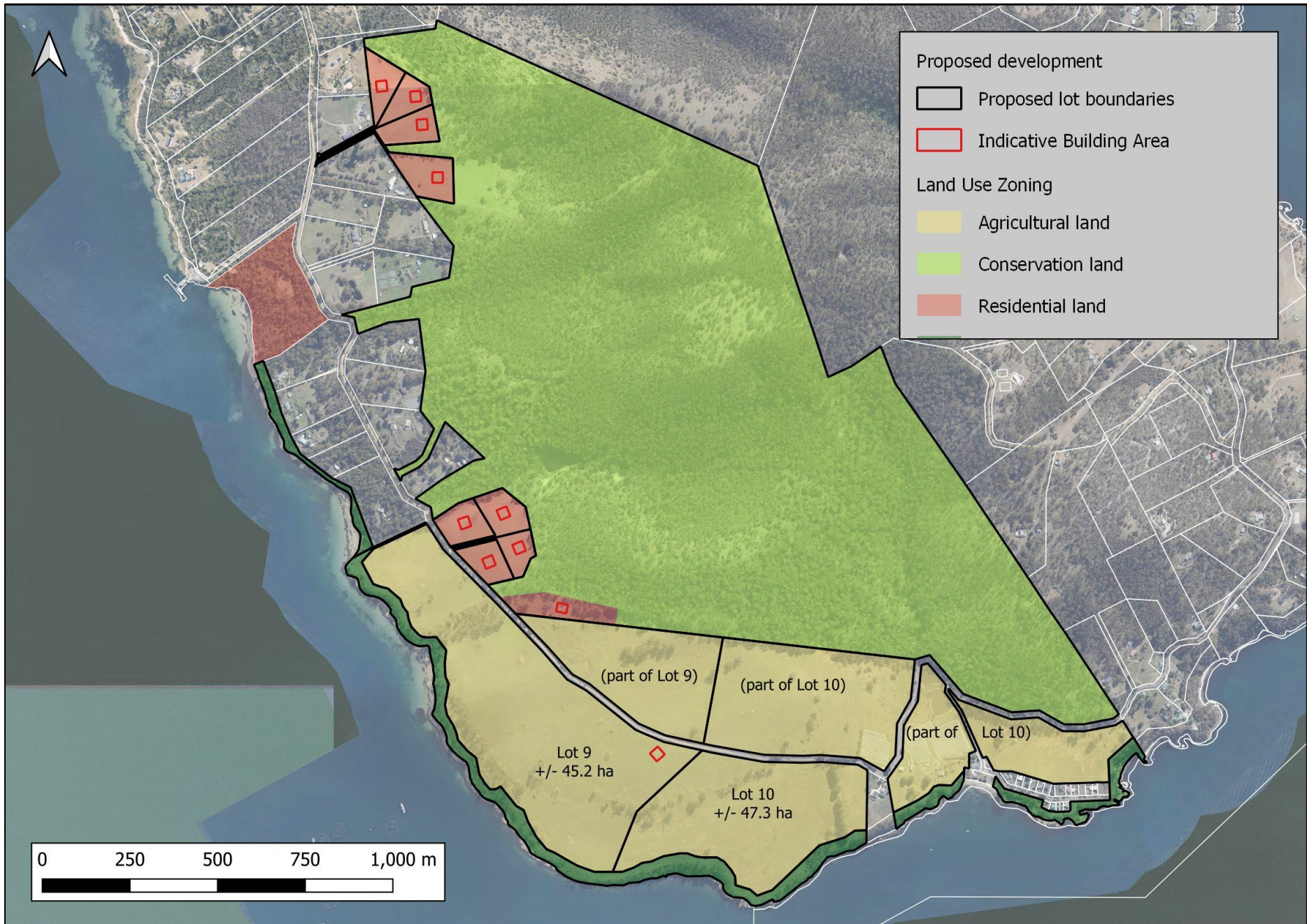


Figure 2. Whole Farm Plan Map