

8 Conclusion

This chapter provides the justification for the proposal taking into account its biophysical, social and economic impacts, the suitability of the site and whether or not the proposal is in the public interest. The proposal was also considered in the context of the objectives of the EP&A Act, including the principles of ecologically sustainable development as defined in Schedule 2 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*.

8.1 Justification

The proposal would form one of the principal arterial transport corridors within the South West Growth Centre. There would be substantial traffic growth in future years due to development in the South West Growth Centre and nearby areas.

The Northern Road passes through several precincts that have or are to be developed within the South West Centre including Oran Park, Marylands, Lowes Creek, Bringelly, North Bringelly and future industrial precincts within the South West Growth Centre. This road would be the primary access for residents and workers in the area. As such, the proposal would be an integral piece of infrastructure, along with other road upgrades, for the social and economic success of this future growth area and meets the objectives of a number of NSW State plans and strategies.

The proposal involves the upgrade of about 15 kilometres of two-lane single carriageway to a four-lane dual carriageway. The proposal would allow for an ultimate six-lane divided road, with the future widening to occur in the median area. The main objectives of the proposal include to:

- Improve the accessibility of The Northern Road to accommodate for the future traffic growth generated from the South West Growth Centres.
- Reduce future traffic congestion.
- Minimise the impact on the environment through the utilisation of the existing road corridor where possible.
- Improve accessibility and efficiency for public transport.
- Improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.
- Minimise the proposal “whole of life cost”.

The proposal would meet these objectives.

8.2 Objects of the EP&A Act

The objects of the EP&A Act for the proposal are considered in table 8-1.

Table 8-1 Objects of the EP&A Act

Object	Comment
5(a)(i) To encourage the proper management, development and conservation of natural and artificial resources, including agricultural land, natural areas, forests, minerals, water, cities, towns and villages for the purpose of promoting the social and economic welfare of the community and a better environment.	The proposal would improve the transport network, and promote the use of sustainable modes of transport including cycling, walking and bus networks.

Object	Comment
5(a)(ii) To encourage the promotion and co-ordination of the orderly economic use and development of land.	The proposal is required to cater for the development of land associated with the South West Growth Centre.
5(a)(iii) To encourage the protection, provision and co-ordination of communication and utility services.	The proposal has been designed to minimise impacts on communication and utility services (as addressed in section 3.5).
5(a)(iv) To encourage the provision of land for public purposes.	The proposal is required to cater for the development of land associated with the South West Growth Centre which provides additional housing, employment and recreational land.
5(a)(v) To encourage the provision and co-ordination of community services and facilities.	The proposal is required to cater for the development of land associated with the South West Growth Centre which provides additional community facilities including open space, recreational land and walking and cycling routes.
5(a)(vi) To encourage the protection of the environment, including the protection and conservation of native animals and plants, including threatened species, populations and ecological communities, and their habitats.	The proposal would occur within a modified and disturbed urban environment. Native plants and animals, including threatened species, populations and ecological communities and their habitats are considered in section 6.2.
5(a)(vii) To encourage ecologically sustainable development.	Ecologically sustainable development was considered in sections 8.2.1 – 8.2.4 below.
5(a)(viii) To encourage the provision and maintenance of affordable housing.	Not relevant to the proposal.
5(b) To promote the sharing of the responsibility for environmental planning between different levels of government in the State.	Not relevant to the proposal.
5(c) To provide increased opportunity for public involvement and participation in environmental planning and assessment.	The proposal development process has involved consultation with relevant stakeholders. Consultation undertaken and proposed is outlined in chapter 5.

8.2.1 The precautionary principle

The precautionary principle deals with certainty in decision-making. It provides that where there is a threat of serious or irreversible environmental damage, the absence of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason to postpone measures to avoid environmental degradation.

Alternative design options were considered and implemented to reduce the risk of serious and irreversible impacts on the environment, including avoiding significant environmental aspects (such as heritage and threatened species), where feasible.

The assessment of potential environmental impacts has sought to minimise impacts of the proposal on the environment. Where impacts would be likely, a number of safeguards are proposed to minimise them. These safeguards would be implemented during detailed design, construction and operation of the proposal. No safeguards are postponed as a result of lack of scientific certainty.

8.2.2 Intergenerational equity

Intergenerational equity provides that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations.

The proposal would cater for the future population growth in the South West Growth Centre by improving the capacity, safety and services of the road. The proposal would benefit future generations by addressing the future increases in traffic volumes and traffic congestion associated with South West Growth Centre. While the proposal would have some adverse impacts, they were not considered to be of a nature or extent that would result in disadvantage to any specific section of the community or to future generations.

8.2.3 Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity

The conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity properties that the diversity of genes, species, populations and communities, as well as the ecosystems and habitats to which they belong, must be maintained and improved to ensure their survival.

An assessment of the existing local environment has been undertaken to identify and manage any potential impact of the proposal on local biodiversity. The concept design has been refined to reduce impacts on local biodiversity, such as realigning the corridor and locating ancillary facilities away from high conservation areas, where possible.

A total of 59 hectares of vegetation would be removed as part of the proposal, including 58.3 hectares in certified areas and 0.1 hectares in non-certified areas within the boundaries of the South West Growth Centre. The remaining 0.7 hectares of vegetation would be cleared in areas located outside the South West Growth Centre boundaries. Of this 0.7 hectares, 0.6 hectares of vegetation was considered to be Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs) including 0.4 hectares of Cumberland Plain Woodland and 0.1 hectares of River-flat Eucalypt Forest. Assessments of significance were undertaken for these two TECs and found to not be significant and would be offset with an area of vegetation in accordance with the relevant biodiversity measure of the biodiversity certification (refer to section 6.2.4).

The proposal would not significantly fragment or isolate any existing large patches and would not compromise biological diversity or ecological integrity. No significant impacts to flora and fauna species were identified.

8.2.4 Improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms

Improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms provide that costs to the environment should be factored into the economic costs of a proposal.

The REF has examined the environmental consequences of the proposal and identified mitigation measures for areas which have the potential to experience

adverse impacts. Requirements imposed in terms of implementation of these mitigation measures would result in an economic cost to RMS. The implementation of mitigation measures would increase both the capital and operating costs of the proposal. This signifies that environmental resources were given appropriate valuation. The concept design has been developed with an objective of minimising potential impacts on the surrounding environment. This indicates that the concept design has been developed with an environmental objective in mind.

8.3 Conclusion

The proposal, being the upgrade of The Northern Road between The Old Northern Road, Narellan and Mersey Road, Bringelly is being planned and developed in parallel with the development of the South West Growth Centre. The proposal would cater for the substantial traffic growth predicted along The Northern Road arising from increased residential and commercial development in the South West Growth Centre and nearby areas.

The proposal is subject to assessment under Part 5 of the EP&A Act. The REF has examined and taken into account to the fullest extent possible all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment by reason of the proposed activity. This includes consideration of conservation agreements and plans of management under the NPW Act, joint management and biobanking agreements under the TSC Act, wilderness areas, critical habitat, impacts on threatened species, populations and ecological communities and their habitats and other protected fauna and native plants.

A number of potential environmental impacts from the proposal were avoided or reduced during the concept design development. The proposal as described in the REF best meets the proposal objectives but would still result in temporary disruptions to traffic flow and access, removal of vegetation (including communities listed under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* and *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*), impacts to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage items, noise and vibration impacts and property acquisition. The proposal would reduce the curtilage of Orielton a State listed heritage item which would have a minor negative effect on the heritage significance of this non-Aboriginal cultural heritage item. Safeguards detailed in this REF would ameliorate or minimise these expected impacts. The proposal would reduce travel times, improve access to the South West Growth Centre precincts as they become available and improve access and safety for cyclists and pedestrians. On balance the proposal is considered to be justified.

This review of environmental factors concludes that the proposal would not have a significant impact on the environment. Therefore, it would not be necessary for an environmental impact statement to be prepared and approval to be sought for the proposal from the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure under Part 5.1 of the EP&A Act. The proposal would also be unlikely to significantly affect threatened species, populations or ecological communities or their habitats, within the meaning of the TSC Act or FM Act and therefore a Species Impact Statement would not be required. The proposal would also not affect Commonwealth land or have a significant impact on any matters of national environmental significance, and therefore a referral to SEWPaC is not required.