



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc
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The General Manager,
Port Stephens Council,
P.O. Box 42,
Raymond Terrace, 2324
Attn: Mr R. Falkenmire

Sent by email to council@portstephens.nsw.gov.au

Re: Development Application Form – DA 16-2018-772-1-3221 Pacific Highway Kings Hill & 35 Six Mile and Revised Concept Development Application

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. (HBOC) objects to aspects of the above development and revised Concept plan for the following reasons:

Avian surveys documented by Cumberland Ecology (2019) are wholly inadequate and carried out only in a single season in 2017. Between 2014 and 2018 only 46 species were detected by them. Birdlife Australia's Birdata lists 130 species.

Australian Painted Snipe *Rostratula australis* listed as endangered under both the Australian Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and the *NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* is known to occur on Irrawang Swamp (wetland 803) but is not mentioned in the fauna survey by Cumberland Ecology.

By Cumberland Ecology's own admission, a full bird survey of migratory wetland species has not been conducted within the study area despite the fact that the site called Irrawang Swamp is an important and well-known wetland for waterbirds. Irrawang Swamp is a site of national significance for the migratory species, Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii* as more than the EPBC Act threshold of 18 individuals frequently occur. See a summary of population numbers at:

<https://www.hboc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Lathams-Snipe-The-Whistler-Vol-12.pdf>

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* and Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, also migratory shorebirds protected under international conservation agreements, have been recorded by HBOC members on Irrawang Swamp.

Pedestrian, horse and connecting access roads are immediately adjacent to Irrawang Swamp and will impact on the wetland causing disturbance to species roosting and foraging. Residential development surrounds and hems in Irrawang Swamp. This will cause disturbance to wildlife, particularly avian species currently using the site as roosting and foraging area.

Irrawang Swamp forms part of a wildlife corridor and adequate buffers are required to maintain its integrity. The "Kings Hill Urban Release" map shows a green area (extent open space) immediately adjacent to Irrawang Swamp. The map also shows:

Precinct 7 - "opportunity to create unique environment villages...."

What does this actually mean? As there are no further details at hand we request further information as to how this residential development sits in relation to Irrawang Swamp. Disturbance is a serious threat to birds at roosting and foraging sites.

“Disturbance – the response of birds to a stimulus such as the presence of a person – is considered a conservation threat for some Australian birds. The distance at which a bird flees from perceived danger is defined as the flight-initiation distance (FID), and could be used to designate separation distances between birds and stimuli that might cause disturbance.”

See attached scientific papers for further information about Flight Initiation Distances and buffer zones around wetlands.

Irrawang Swamp is an ephemeral wetland subject to wetting and drying periods. Stormwater from any development should not be permitted to interrupt this natural process.

The wooded parts of the site contain forest types known to provide habitat for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater *Anthochaera phrygia* and Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor*, particularly in areas dominated by Spotted Gum-Ironbark and Forest Red Gum associations. The vast majority of these habitats have been cleared in south-eastern temperate Australia, with the result that any remnant forested areas should be considered as significant because they provide habitat for these and other threatened woodland birds. Examples of threatened woodland birds that have been recorded in the area include Dusky Woodswallow, Little Lorikeet, Varied Sittella and Grey-crowned Babbler. Of these, only the latter has been recorded during formal surveys on the site, though the others are known to occur [BirdLife Australia and HBOC unpublished data]. However, we would make the following comments:

To destroy Endangered Ecological Communities in return for the payment of a fee by the developer is not acceptable. Such Communities are already rare commodities and to destroy them is irresponsible.

Forests should not be damaged or removed in view of the effects of climate change. No mention of climate change is mentioned in 4.2.3.1.8. The Public Interest. The effects of climate change is very much in the public interest and destruction of forests contributes to climate change.

The forests and wetlands of Kings Hill are biodiversity hotspots and are no doubt considered assets in the Port Stephens biodiversity portfolio. It is in the public interest to retain, protect and maintain such areas for the sake of existing biodiversity and for future generations of people who may like to have the choice to interact with them.

HBOC requests that you take into consideration our submission even though outside the closing date as the omission of information pertaining to the environment is a serious matter.

HBOC would appreciate being notified when future development applications come to hand.

Submission by A. Lindsey on behalf of Hunter Bird Observers Club 18/08/2019.

For further contact: ann.lindsey@bigpond.com

c.c. Department of Planning, Industry Environment