



August 2020

The strategic conservation area



The strategic conservation area, identified in the Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan, is the area of greatest strategic value to deliver long-term conservation outcomes in the Cumberland subregion.

What is the strategic conservation area?

The strategic conservation area is land within the Cumberland subregion that has been identified as having important biodiversity value. This includes areas with large remnants of native vegetation and important connectivity across the landscape, and that has ecological restoration potential.

Approximately 28,300 hectares of land in the Cumberland subregion has been identified and mapped as strategic conservation area in the [Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan](#) (the Plan). This area supports the conservation program under the Plan.

What are the objectives of the strategic conservation area?

The strategic conservation area includes large patches of native vegetation with good connectivity to other patches, or areas that provide habitat for threatened plants and animals. Managing biodiversity in these areas will help to protect threatened ecological communities and species, and will enhance habitat connectivity across the Cumberland subregion.

Managing these areas will also make Western Sydney more liveable, by protecting vegetation across the region and creating greener public spaces and landscapes. This will provide benefits to communities living across Western Sydney and support the delivery of the Western Parkland City.

The strategic conservation area is also used to identify potential conservation lands to offset the impacts of development over the life of the Plan. Conservation lands will be established over time and will include new public reserves and biodiversity stewardship sites on public or private land.

Landholders may choose to help protect the biodiversity values of these areas by establishing a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement on their land. This will generate economic value from these biodiversity attributes and potentially generate income to protect and manage the environment.

New public reserves, such as national parks are also being proposed. Three potential reserve sites have been identified from within the strategic conservation area. These are the Georges River Koala Reserve, announced as part of the Plan, and two reserve investigation areas.

What are the reserve investigation areas?

The reserve investigation areas are areas that could be vital to protecting and restoring threatened native vegetation communities, and safeguarding habitat or connectivity for important native plants and animals in the area. The sites under investigation for feasibility include:

- the Gulguer Reserve Investigation Area in the south-west of the Plan Area
- the Confluence Reserve Investigation Area in the north of the Plan Area.

Although this is a government priority, the acquisition of these areas will be a long-term process. All identified properties will be acquired through voluntary agreement. Compulsory acquisition may be used in limited circumstances and only when voluntary methods have been unsuccessful. In these cases, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (the department) will consult closely with landholders before any decision is made.

The proposed State Environmental Planning Policy (proposed SEPP) includes legal mechanisms that allow the department to identify land for acquisition as funding becomes available and after consultation.

How do I find out what land is in the strategic conservation area?

The [Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan Viewer](#) displays land in the strategic conservation area. You can search for your property by selecting the strategic conservation area layer and then entering your property address or lot number.

How has land been identified as strategic conservation area?

The department used an independently peer reviewed method to identify and map areas with high biodiversity value that:

- best support an ecologically functioning and connected landscape
- can offset the direct, indirect, prescribed and cumulative impacts on biodiversity from development in Western Sydney, in line with statutory requirements of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (NSW) and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth).

The strategic conservation area is the result of this process. For more information see the section on the conservation priorities method in [the Plan](#).

How does the strategic conservation area affect what I can do on my land?

Landholders in the strategic conservation area who want to develop their land will still be able to submit development applications through the relevant development assessment pathway.

The Plan will introduce planning controls for the strategic conservation area that will minimise impacts on areas with high biodiversity value that can deliver regional biodiversity outcomes. As part of the assessment process the consent authority will need to consider the region's biodiversity values when assessing development applications.

The planning controls outlined in the proposed SEPP for the strategic conservation area do not affect the current zoning or the land uses permitted under this zoning. Landowners can continue to live on their land and use their properties as they lawfully did before the Plan commenced.

What development controls apply to the strategic conservation area?

For developments in the strategic conservation area, councils and other consent authorities will need to consider impacts on the region's biodiversity values. Proposed developments will need to manage those impacts by:

- minimising vegetation clearing, and avoiding impact to high-value vegetation or potential vegetation restoration areas
- ensuring that the development is designed in a way that does not escalate any disturbances to the habitat, or disrupt the surrounding natural environment
- ensuring the development has minimised any loss of habitat or potential impact on threatened species, habitat connectivity or links to wildlife corridors and restoration areas.

The [Explanation of Intended Effect](#) describes, in more detail, the biodiversity matters that a consent authority must consider when assessing any development application in the strategic conservation area.

Do the development controls apply to my whole lot if only part of it is mapped as strategic conservation area?

The development controls apply to the land that is **mapped**. Where a lot is only partly mapped as strategic conservation area the relevant development controls only apply to the mapped portion(s) of the lot.

Are there other opportunities for my land if my property is in the strategic conservation area?

The strategic conservation area is land with high biodiversity value, as identified by the Plan. As a private landholder, you may be interested in establishing a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement (BSA) on your land to protect existing biodiversity.

A BSA is a cooperative agreement between a landholder and the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust. It allows a landholder to enter into the agreement to manage the area according to an agreed management plan. A BSA is registered on the title of the property and provides in-perpetuity protection of the site's biodiversity values with a secure, ongoing funding source.

As well as supporting the conservation of Western Sydney's biodiversity, establishing a BSA may give you an opportunity to generate an income by trading biodiversity credits. Credits are generated according to the expected improvement in biodiversity through management of the site.

If English is not your first language, please call 131 450. Ask for an interpreter in your language and then ask to be connected to our Information Centre on 1300 305 695.

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